

BOARDSPORT
source.
EUROPEAN SURF/SKATE/SNOW BUSINESS

#106 APRIL/MAY
2021 €5

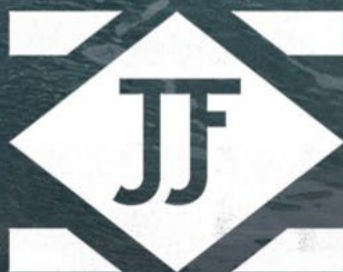


OXBOW BIG WIG
BRAND NEW EURO PADDLE SHOW
EURO BOARDSPORT BIZ ANALYSIS

RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDES
SURFBOARDS, SUNGLASSES,
LONGBOARDS, WING FOILS, HANGING
SHOES, KITEBOARDING, WAKE VESTS



DAKINE



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JJF COLLECTION

KAIMANA LEASH

TRACTION PAD



NEW GLADIATOR 

Immediate reaction, drive and speed thanks to the new Carbon laminated epoxy technology.



BOTTOM CONTOUR

Single to slight double concave for liveliness under foot.



ROCKER

Lower front rocker to flatter belly with slight tail flip for more critical turns in smaller surf.



RAILS

Medium volume performance rail refined through tail for control.



OUTLINE

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LC6 TECHNOLOGY

Surfboard riding in the last decade has seen levels of performance rise continuously. The surfing youth are taking boards to places we never thought were possible. This level of performance is often very closely linked to the equipment used for particular conditions. Here at Euroglass we are on the cutting edge of this high performance evolution.

We wanted to provide the opportunity for the average surfer to experience it. LC6 is a carbon laminated epoxy technology. The idea was to create a fast, light and resistant board mixing up our creativity and extensive technical knowledge. The results speak for themselves. Get ready to join the revolution.

SUP COLLECTION 2021



9.10
CLASSIC



9.10 10.4 11.2 12.0
LET'S PADDLE



9.10 10.6 11.2
LIGHT ULT



10.6 12.0
SUPVENTURE DLT



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NEW INNOVATION

SUPKAYAK



10.0

12.0





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First high-performance neoprene incorporating oyster shell powder



GURU PRO OYSTERPRENE



OYSTERPRENE®

First high-performance neoprene
incorporating oyster shell powder.
A Soörüz innovation.

Aware of the impact of neoprene on the environment, Soörüz has been researching for the last ten years to reduce its environmental footprint by developing new materials based on renewable and/or recyclable materials.

The **OYSTERPRENE**, is used in our most flexible and high-performance neoprenes that make up our expert and pro ranges. The process consists of replacing limestone by a natural, recycled and renewable powder made from the crushing of oyster shells. This solution does not alter the technical performance of our products and improves their environmental footprint without impacting the price for the consumer.

In 2021, we are going even further in our environmental approach by democratising our neoprene made from oyster shell powder. Our best-sellers, the FIGHTER and DIVINE ranges, will now be in OYSTERPRENE®.



The aim of this label is to identify our most environmentally friendly products and reduce our ecological footprint.



HELLO SOURCE#106

It's been some 12 months! While the virus still rages across certain corners of the planet, the vaccination is providing much needed optimism. As previously reported, boardsports practiced in summer have benefited greatly from the boom in solo sports and despite the dismal winter for snowsports caused by widespread travel bans, this summer is looking like another one for the record books.

We are in the midst of a meteoric boom in surfing and skateboarding. Demand has outstripped supply from shipping to stock, right the way through to raw materials. Where possible companies have moved production closer to home, but all summer

eyes are currently firmly fixed on the many layers of the supply chain

With the rise of staycation combined with furloughed staff, the number of new participants to our sports has soared. And now they've invested a year of money, time and pain there's a good chance they'll stick with their new favourite sport. They enter the sport purchasing beginner setups and while not all will rise through the ranks and spend accordingly, those who do are the future of our business.

We also have the Summer (and Winter!) Olympics coming up shortly and while snowboarding's viewing figures rank highest at the Games, the global spotlight awaits our summer boardsports.

Categories not previously subscribed to the pre-order model have had to adapt to

better plan for their production cycles and here's hoping the pent-up demand from a locked down winter will allow retailers and brands to clear their inventories and that this can carry on through to winter.

I managed to move my family from East London down to the Cornish Coast of England during the third British lockdown and on speaking with local retailers and lifeguards, they are bracing themselves for another summer of pandemonium. While this is good for business, no one likes the idea of busier line-ups, but with the wave pool arms race showing no signs of slowing, there are a few more waves to go round. At least this is how I'm justifying my wave count to the locals!

Always Sideways
Harry Mitchell Thompson
Ed-in-chief

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Published by ESB
22 Friars Street, Sudbury
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Boardsport SOURCE
is published bi-monthly
© ESB. All Rights Reserved
boardsportsource.com

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On the cover Joao "Janita" Alves Torq/Roam sales representative Portugal.
Photo by Ricardo Bravo

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NEWS

#106

Matthijs Visch Appointed General Manager, EMEA At Patagonia

Starting in May 2021 and operating out of Patagonia's Amsterdam HQ, Matthijs Visch has been appointed General Manager, EMEA. Visch brings 24 years of managerial experience and a passion for the natural world to the role.

Events Of WSL Championship Tour's Next Leg Confirmed

The Corona Open Mexico presented by Quiksilver will replace February's cancelled Santa Cruz Pro. The Corona Open J-Bay and the MEO Pro Portugal have been postponed until 2022 and the Outerknown Tahiti Pro in Teahupo'o will also play host to the women's event alongside the men's.

Columbia Sportswear Co's Senior VP, Emerging Brands Doug Morse Announces Retirement

After 5 years at Columbia Sportswear Company as Senior VP, Emerging Brands, Doug Morse has announced his retirement. Craig Zanon will fill the Senior VP, Emerging Brands role; Zanon will begin in his role on April 5, with Morse retiring in the summer.

Dew Tour Announces New Iowa Location & Dates For May 2021

Lauridsen Skatepark, the new Olympic-level skatepark in Des Moines, Iowa, is to host the 2021 Dew Tour Skateboard competition. The Dew Tour event will also serve as the only U.S.-based Olympic qualifier for the street and park disciplines.

WSL Partners With Former ASP CEO Brodie Carr To Aid Commercial Development In EMEA

Brodie Carr's Front Foot Agency (FFA) has partnered with the WSL to aid the development and growth of surfing & the WSL across the E.M.E.A. region via marketing and advertising.

Florence Marine X Appoints Pat O'Connell As President

Pat O'Connell, former SVP, Tours & Head of Competition at WSL and formerly of Hurley, has been appointed President of Florence Marine X, the apparel brand co-founded by John John Florence. The role, which he will begin immediately, will be based out of Kandui Holdings HQ in California.

Oakley Official Eyewear Brand For 2021 WSL Championship Tour

For 2021, Oakley have partnered with the WSL to provide eyewear and PPE to the Championship Tour's staff & broadcast team. The partnership also sees Oakley become the official eyewear brand of the 2021 WSL Championship Tour.

Shiner Ltd Opens New Facility In The Netherlands

UK-based distributor Shiner Ltd are strengthening their business in Europe through opening a new facility in Rotterdam. Shiner EU BV will enable quicker and more efficient distribution throughout Europe, while providing logistical solutions to issues raised by Brexit.

Stephanie Micci Appointed Global Creative & Design Director At Roxy

Roxy has appointed Stephanie Micci as their Global Creative and Design Director, a newly created role that spans all of Roxy's product categories. WSL x Rip Curl Form 3 Year Partnership For Rip Curl WSL Finals The WSL Championship Tour is to culminate with the Rip Curl WSL Finals, a one-day event that sees the CT's top 5 men and women compete for the World Title. Rip Curl has partnered with the WSL for 3 years on this, which further demonstrates their commitment to "supporting pro surfers".

Boardriders Announced As Official Sponsors Of Swiss Wavepool Alaïa Bay

Ahead of its May opening and public launch in June, Alaïa Bay has announced Boardriders as its official sponsors. Boardriders brands, Quiksilver, Roxy and Billabong will see the provision of surfboards, wetsuits and experiences to surfers, while also opening a new retail concept store on the site.

BB Agentur Appointed Distributors Of Pro-Tec Winter Sport Range Across Europe + UK

Denmark-based distributor BB Agentur Asp has been appointed as distributor of the winter sport range at Pro-Tec. BB Agentur will distribute Pro-Tec products across Europe and in the UK.

Columbia Appoints Skip Potter As Executive VP, Chief Digital Information Officer

Skip Potter has been appointed the newly created role of Executive VP, Chief Digital Information Officer at Columbia Sportswear Company, owners of Columbia Sportswear. In this role, Skip will be responsible for developing and progressing Columbia's digital footprint.

Eyewear Brand Ûs The Movement Launched By Surf Industry Pros & Vets

Eyewear and accessory brand, Ûs the Movement has been founded by surf industry vet, former Billabong EMEA Sales Director Nigel Gibb along with Gony Zubizaretta, Kepa Acero, Marlon Lipke, and Roby D'amico. Ûs the Movement will also be expanding their product line for 2021, prioritising environmental responsibility and sustainable bio-materials.

Ka-risma Sales Agency take on new brands

Southern Germany based Sales agency ka-risma has taken on the European distribution of Telos snowboards and the distribution of Sandy Shapes in Germany, Austria and Switzerland and Rad Air in Germany

OutDoor by ISPO moves dates and teams up with European Outdoor Summit

The OutDoor by ISPO Global Summit Edition will now take place from 5-7 October, in person at Messe Munich and online. The show will partner up with this year's European Outdoor Summit (EOS) to create one major European event. Face-to-face contact and shared experiences will remain at the heart of the combined event. For more info: www.ispo.com/en/outdoor.

Seek trade show is back

This summer's show will be from July 6-8 at its new location in Frankfurt am Main. As before the show will be held in conjunction with the Premium show and the Fashiontech conference. The change in location after a decade in Berlin should provide a new impetus behind this key summer event. www.seek.fashion

Launch of The Paddle Sport show

Philippe Doux, founder of KS Publishing and publisher of Kayak Session magazine, Paddle World magazine, Stand Up Paddle World magazine and the Paddler's Guide, is launching The Paddle Sports show, a new European Paddle Sports industry trade launching in Lyon, France from September 29-October 1, 2021. For more info please read the interview with Philippe in this issue and go to www.thepaddlesportshow.com

C-Skins wetsuits appoints Peak Distribution as Distributor for Benelux and Germany

After 9 years working together with Peak Distribution as an agent building the C-Skins brand in these territories the transition to a distribution model came naturally in the wake of Brexit. Peak Distribution, who service an extensive network of wind, surf, kite, board sport retailers and surf schools will continue to work with the team at C-Skins to develop and distribute the best cold-water products available – all tested in the chilly waters of Northern Europe.



#EndlessPlayTime
SUP | SURF | WINDSURF | KAYAK | BOAT

BIC Sport becomes TAHE

**New name
New dynamics
Same roots!**

Photo: E. Berthier

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ALL NEW INTERVIEW

PADDLE SPORTS SHOW

Philippe Doux, Founder of KS Publishing, an international paddle sports media house, publisher of Kayak Session magazine, Paddle World magazine, Stand Up Paddle World magazine and the Paddler's Guide, announced last summer that he is taking over from European Paddle Sports industry trade show PaddleExpo and introducing the Paddle Sports Show, launching in Lyon (France) September 29-October 1, 2021.



Please tell us about your new paddle sports show.

The Paddle Sports Show is the logical successor to PaddleExpo, a show that has been going for over 15 years, which took place in Nuremberg (Germany) and was the world's biggest trade show when it came to paddle sports. Exhibitors and retailers from around the globe gathered every year to do business, catch up with each other and drink a few beers... the recipe seemed to be working well, so we will try to keep the standard and bring a few new elements, but the ambition is to first and foremost to remain the place to be when it comes to paddle sports.

What was the thinking behind launching the event?

Well, I had been working with the organizers of PaddleExpo since the show's creation, so I knew quite a bit about it. When the organizer called to tell me that he decided to stop the adventure for personal reasons, he encouraged me to take over. The occasion was fabulous; although I had to think about it, I quickly realized it would be amazing to bring the whole industry to a new place and apply a few ideas I've had for years.

North America – 45% Europe); We have also been organizing various events and festivals, including our collaboration with the Nuremberg show, so we have a lot of experience in the game. We have developed a really close relationship with many in the industry over the years. We are very proud and fortunate to have received their support.

Why should brands book space?

Because they are going to do business and have fun! But more so because their customers are there, with new ones waiting - because their competition is there too! Because the whole industry is there. Because the Paddle Sports Show is the answer to paddle sports businesses' needs. It will be the place to be and the place to meet. Because it is easy to travel to Lyon. Because it is a fun city. And because the parties will be wild!

How has the idea been received, and how are the bookings?

As of late March, we have a 7000 m2 hall that is 85% spoken for already. We have the option to expand or to stay where we are. The major players in all segments already have their booth numbers. To get back to your question, to have the show nearly filled six months before the show, on a COVID year, the answer is more than positive!

We hear that you are bringing some additional components to the traditional trade show program, is that right?

Yes, we are bringing an on-water demo! While we did not invent the wheel on that one, we are excited to bring the option of demoing products on the water at any time during the show, as the exhibition centre is located 250m from the riverbank. At any time during the show, an exhibitor can walk to the riverbank and demo their products!

You also have side events running alongside the show?

While it is and will remain a pure B2B show, we will have a series of satellite events such as a film festival, the traditional Product of the Year Awards ceremony, the Paddlers Awards, a fun industry party, and more. On top of that, we will have talks on various subjects from industry leaders and outsiders alike. These exchanges will lead visitors and exhibitors to walk away from the show richer in information, understanding, and in their connection to paddle sports than before.

Why should retailers attend the event?

Because absolutely all the brands will be there! As you know, there is no better way to make sure you choose the right products for your customers than when every option is in front of you, in one place. Great business, the opportunity to enjoy time with old friends, build new friendships and connections, and wild parties, that is what we want to provide!

www.thepaddlesportshow.com



How's the move been received within the industry?

Extremely positive. Without a doubt, the fact that the vast majority of exhibitors were working with our magazines and websites already helped tremendously. We have been publishing Paddle Sports-related magazines and websites for the past 20 years, published in English and sold worldwide (50%

Sunday

MACHADO



RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

SURFBOARDS 2021

What do the COVID vaccine and surfboards have in common? We are hoping that we will have sufficient supplies of both in 2021... The question is not whether surfboards will sell well this summer, the issue is how to properly meet the demand when the time comes to making your orders. Ensuing trends with **David Bianic** in this Surfboards Buyer's Guide 2021.



The equipment market has already been going well for some time, so now it's all about meeting this exponential demand and there are concerns that there won't be enough boards to load into the drying room while the others sell like hot cakes. "We have been out of stock in almost every board and model since last November", reveals Nuno Matta from Matta Surfboards in Portugal! And the reason for this is that the "supply chain and shipping is a nightmare at the moment," confirms Andy Wirtz from Norden Surfboards at the other end of European surfing in Germany. He has managed to get his customers to accept a price increase but one that doesn't even make up for "the fact that we are dealing with 4-5 x higher freight rates (than before)." For Kerry Powell at Jorcani Sports, Europe's Surftex distributor, increasing board prices is not yet the order of the day but she is sure that the enormous costs of logistics will have an impact on the cheapest products on the market with a greater effect on their margins.

The cost of materials has risen partly because of the increase in oil prices, explains Nick Uricchio, Co-Manager and head shaper at Semente Surfboards: "All by-products like resins, acetones and polyurethane are directly affected." For him, one solution was to consolidate his partnership with Portuguese blanks manufacturer Formula One. For brands relying on Asian manufacturers like Haydenshapes, delays are to be expected, reveals Bernardo Cioni (Director of European distributor Holy Sport), but the boards will be "in shops in May, June and beginning of July" and restocks have already been anticipated in their manufacturing.

BEGINNERS = SOFTBOARDS?

Schools and surf shops have been signalling the widespread arrival of new participants since the spring of 2020. For a giant like NSP, this beginner/intermediate category is at the heart of their business and to consolidate their position the brand is adding to their range in 2021 with a Teacher's

"Supply chain and shipping is a nightmare at the moment" Andy Wirtz, Norden Surfboards

Pet model, "designed specifically as a price point for surf schools with aids marked on the board to help teachers and students, plus the boards come with a convenient click-fin system", reveals Caren Forbes (Marketing Director). This kind of firm positioning towards a more "casual" use can reap rewards if you are to believe Benoît Breccq, Brand and Marketing Manager at Venon, who saw a 30% rise in turnover in 2020: "The performance shortboard is not our target, nor that of our customers." When it comes to positioning, a noteworthy strategy comes from the Sindustry group in Spain who are rolling out three brands according to the surfer's standard/needs: boards from Alone (high-performance, PU and EPS), Next (beginner/intermediate, 100% PU) and finally Mobyk, softboards "seen on the big wide summer beaches to the massive waves at Escondido", affirms General Director Santo Zaldua.

However, all the brands we asked and without exception refute the hypothesis that softboards represent a threat. "Technically, like back in the days of BIC, we're seeing it in a positive light", assures Thomas Cardinal, Co-Manager of UWL Surfboards in France because the "softboard customers of today will be our "classic" board customers of tomorrow". A certain number are also seeing softboards as an alternative market rather than direct competition: "The idea behind it is to produce boards that can suit beginners but can also be really fun and shreddable for a confirmed surfer", explains the Marketing Team Europe at Pyzel who launched a John John Florence softboard aimed at "funformance". Another brand that knows how to use soft power, Ocean & Earth have a huge range of soft boards

that they know how to push through sexy cross brandings, like the Ezi-Rider twin range with Mark Richards or their Creative Army longboards with soft epoxy construction in collaboration with WSL world champion Josh Constable.

TRENDS 2021: SIZE UP!

After a decade of shortening, the trend for longer boards is strengthening in 2021, giving rise to an unprecedented situation, as Chris Grow from Firewire summarises: "The increase in new participants together with an ageing surf population moving to longer boards has had an effect on the total mix." Indeed, their mid lengths have been a great success, capable of attracting both beginners as well as expert surfers thanks to their choice ambassadors such as Rob Machado, C.J. Nelson and Harley Ingleby. It's the same reasoning that pushed Haydenshapes into developing a "mid" named Glider, "a style of shape requested by Craig Anderson to surf in average waves as well as on some bigger days at home, when he couldn't travel", explains Brock Carpenter. Already featuring in Torq's range for some time now, the Mod Fun has also found a second wind thanks to this fashion for mid lengths, available in TET and TET-CS (Carbon Strip) construction and in sleek colours that evoke traditionally glassed retro boards even though they are actually moulded boards.

In line with mid lengths, the volume of shortboards is also continuing to expand, assures Mr. Thruster himself, Simon Anderson: "What's trending for me is custom adaptations of old favourite boards including high performance designs, no longer but with a little more volume to 70's single fins or multi-generational retro thrusters." This niche is also one for T&C, as confirmed by Arnaud Touix, partner of Wilco Prins and Stephan Moretti who are relaunching the brand in Europe: "Twinnies and mid lengths or however you want to call them are definitely shapes that will continue to gain ground." Along the same lines are their Glenn Pang Saint, Sinr and Tanaka Glide models that worked really well in 2020.

TRENDS 2021: TWIN TO WIN

Twin-fins continue to gain ground but in a different form. Retro shapes have now been overtaken by modern versions of the twin. After the global success of the hybrid shortboard Hypto Krypto, Haydenshapes are getting in on the action and will soon be offering a Hypto Twin model in a twin-keel fish. Thomas at UWL confirms that this shape is really taking off and that orders are stacking up for their Possessed Twin (retro look performance fish) and Twin Perf (modern twin able to take off like a shortboard). The perfect recipe is now maybe to combine a "heritage" shape with a modern swipe of the planer, like on Glenn Pang from T&C's The Saint, "a piece of surfing history", assures Arnaud Touix, with a slight rocker in front then flat in the middle before reaching its V-bottom at the back, "with slight adjustments to rail and thickness to meet modern performance standards".



Twinnies and mid lengths or however you want to call them are definitely shapes that will continue to gain ground." Arnaud Touix, Town & Country

TRENDS 2021: IS THE HIGH PERFORMANCE SHORTBOARD DEAD?

Is the success of retro, mid length, twin and other longer boards to the detriment of high-performance shortboards? For Johnny Cabianca, Co-

"what's trending for me is custom adaptations of old favourite boards including high performance designs, no longer but with a little more volume to 70's single fins or multi generational retro thrusters."

Simon Anderson



Manager of Basque Country Surf Company, it depends on the spot, like in Australia or California "where the level is higher", most people surf on performance boards. So it's not surprising that Firewire are prioritising their involvement in this market through their sure-fire hit models such as the FRK and Gamma. Equally, Nuno Matta is swearing by these ultra-technical models alone because they make up the majority of his business, models like the TLX by Travis Logie, the SMP2 by Sam Piter for the young guns and finally the J5 from Jadson André. The team at Pyzel say the high-performance shortboard is not under threat but that's mostly because Jon Pyzel has managed to subtly adapt it so "the wide point and the volume were moved forward under the chest providing more paddle power and better wave entry", while keeping the back end honed for manoeuvres.

While this type of shape is less present in the surf shop racks, it's probably because it doesn't enter into "retailer logic" explains Thomas from UWL, because the experienced "and therefore fussy surfer, would head more towards the custom makes".

CONSTRUCTIONS: CHOOSE YOUR CAMP

Tea or coffee? Cream or jam first on your scone? Everyone has their own tastes and when it comes to surfboards, the choice between PU and EPS is not even on the agenda, it's a question of feel, as "little big boss" of Euroglass Stephen Bell reminds us: "Due to the foam's weight and density that PU / PE boards have, it sits a little lower in the water, helping to keep your rail under, giving you a nice curve." With reduced weight, better float and superior pop, EPS/epoxy boards are traditionally aimed at small waves, but that is changing: Pyzel are developing EPS step-ups for Pipeline because "the reactivity of the material is good for tube riding."

Despite this, good old polyurethane dominates production again in 2021: between the 100% PU from Euroglass and the 100% EPS from Firewire and Torq, the average split works out to a ratio of about 80/20 in favour of PU.

DISTRIBUTION: E-COMMERCE TO THE SHOPS' RESCUE

Closures linked to lockdowns, social distancing, etc, the restrictions have forced our market players to use digital tools more than ever. For example, Euroglass have developed a B2C online platform as well as a B2B, while Firewire's e-commerce site sends their traffic to retailers. Firewire are also falling back on drop shipping "to help retailers capture sales through their online stores". This relatively recent operational method seems to be a viable solution for all the players in the chain, especially retailers who are spared from the pressures of having stock in their often-closed stores. Not for too much longer we hope, fingers crossed. ☺

Visit our website to see in depth brand previews of this category.

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Price increases
- 2 More beginner and softboard models
- 3 Midlengths and twin performance
- 4 Sure-fire PU
- 5 E-commerce and dropshipping

NSP

1 W&L Design 2 Fenna Design 3 Australia



ELEMENTS
SLEEP WALKER

DURABLE

ELEMENTS



HYBRID	TINDER-DB	FISH	FUNBOARD	LONGBOARD	SLEEP WALKER
5'6"x19"	5'10"x19 ^{5/8} "	5'6"x19 ^{3/4} "	6'8"x21"	8'0"x22"	9'4"x23 ^{1/4} "
5'9"x19 ^{1/2} "	6'0"x20 ^{1/2} "	6'0"x20 ^{1/2} "	7'2"x21 ^{1/2} "	8'6"x22 ^{1/4} "	9'8"x23 ^{3/4} "
6'0"x20 ^{1/2} "	6'2"x20 ^{3/4} "	6'4"x21"	7'6"x21 ^{3/4} "	9'0"x22 ^{3/4} "	10'0"x24"
6'2"x20 ^{3/4} "	6'4"x21"	6'8"x21 ^{1/2} "		9'6"x23"	
6'4"x21"	6'6"x21 ^{3/8} "	7'2"x22"		10'0"x23 ^{1/2} "	
6'6"x21 ^{1/2} "					

* Additional graphic options available

www.nspsurfboards.com



CSE
CHOPSTIX

PERFORMANCE

CSE



EQUALIZER	CHOPSTIX	TINDER-DB	THE CHEATER	BUTTER KNIFE	PRO-9
7'4"x19 ^{1/2} "	5'4"x19"	5'6"x19"	7'0"x20 ^{3/4} "	8'0"x21"	9'1"x22"
8'4"x20"	5'6"x18 ^{1/16} "	5'8"x19 ^{1/2} "	7'6"x21 ^{1/4} "	8'6"x21 ^{1/2} "	
9'4"x20 ^{3/4} "	5'8"x18 ^{9/16} "	5'10"x19 ^{5/8} "	8'0"x21 ^{3/4} "		
10'0"x21 ^{3/4} "	5'10"x19 ^{1/8} "	6'0"x20 ^{1/2} "			
	6'0"x19 ^{1/4} "	6'2"x20 ^{3/4} "			
	6'2"x19 ^{1/2} "	6'4"x21"			
	6'4"x19 ^{7/8} "	6'6"x21 ^{3/8} "			
		6'8"x21 ^{1/2} "			
		6'10"x21 ^{5/8} "			

Distribution: Surfcloud Lda

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1 Bruno Pianga 2 Amanda Piti 3 Sri Lanka



RETAILER PROFILE

SURFERS LAB, PORTUGAL



Portugal has seen a huge uptick in surf tourism over the past two decades with consistent surf year-round, warmer climes and stunning scenery. Surfers Lab is the retail arm of Portuguese distributor Surfcloud, with stores in Sagres and Peniche / Baleal and we caught up with the team to see how the pandemic has effected their business.

Can you tell us a little bit about the history of Surfers Lab?

Surfers Lab started in Sagres, a very well-known surf destination in the SW of Europe. Back then there weren't really any hardware focused shops, and we had a huge demand in our distribution warehouse, so we decided to open our own retail. Our focus was clearly on hardgoods and we opened with 300 boards, which at that time, was the biggest shop in the south of Portugal. Since then, we have opened a second shop in Peniche / Baleal with an even bigger focus on hardgoods, which so far has proved to be the right decision.

Please talk us through the brands you are carrying. Which brands and products have sold well this past winter?

We have a strong partnership with Rip Curl in our Sagres shop, and a wider variety in our Peniche one. Vissla, SISSTR, O'Neill, Quiksilver, Roxy, Oakley, Carhartt and a few others represent the biggest part of clothing and wetsuits we offer. On the hardgoods side Firewire, DHD, Pyzel, Channel Islands, Lost, Ocean & Earth and Shapers Australia are our biggest ones.

This winter by far Firewire and DHD were the number one surfboard brands and O'Neill and Rip Curl dominated the wetsuit category.

Portugal's government and tourist board has recognised the importance of surf tourism to the country's bottom line... can you explain the importance of surf tourism to your business vs trade from locals?

The south depends a lot on tourism and we could see it in sales, especially in clothing. We still have our local customers and all the foreigners who spend their winter in Sagres support the shop and continued to buy all kinds of hardgoods, so in the end it was a good winter.

On the other hand, in Peniche tourism is an important part of the business. There is a way bigger number of local customers not only from Peniche, but also from Lisbon which is only 45m away.

Sales were down obviously, but we managed to keep the numbers throughout winter with the increase of online/facebook sales.

How has the pandemic affected business? What has the Portuguese government done to help shops such as yours during this pandemic?

As per above, sales did drop due to less tourism, but overall, the increase in demand on all hardgoods somehow compensated for the loss on the clothing side. The Portuguese government had very little support for our segment of the market. Lay-off was basically the only help we got from the government when we were closed due to lockdowns.

What measures have you taken to keep your product available for your customers throughout the lockdowns?

We pushed hard through Facebook and Instagram and we are now investing into our ecomm, which we expect to launch in a couple of months, as well as digital marketing.

How have you secured future supply chain issues?

We spoke with all our main suppliers and they guaranteed that as soon as they receive summer goods we will be at the top of the list to receive our orders. We also spoke with other brands to somehow compensate for the shortage we may have with our usual suppliers.

How do you see the surf market developing in the upcoming season?

It all depends on how the pandemic situation evolves. If we go into more lockdowns or have certain regulations it will affect the business for sure. Overall, I would say that hardgoods sales are here to stay while the clothing business will suffer a bit until things go back to normal. ☺

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STRONGEST

Timeline

ONE XT

LIGHTEST



RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

WING FOILING 2021

Wing foiling is in its infancy but has already made it to the forefront of water sports. The ability to do it in very light wind conditions and its quick learning curve is a jackpot combination. Beach goers everywhere should get used to the sight of wings around them. **By Rocio Enriquez.**



Wing foiling made it to the forefront of water board sports, and it didn't have to elbow its way through. It was invited by the big names in the kiteboarding and windsurfing scene. The quick learning curve and the good fun it offers consolidated its position in just two commercial seasons. Kiteboarders and windsurfers were the early adopters. Now, newcomers see in wing foiling an opportunity to experience the ocean and the wind in a safe and easy way. For boardsports businesses, the potential is huge. They will secure the business of kites and windsurfers. These will always keep a wing set up in their quiver for those light wind days. "Having kites and windsurfers winging is a big tick!", says UK North Distributor, Joe Taylor. Retailers will add the much larger market of complete newbies who will get hooked to the easy learning and quick progression.

For many brands, it is newcomers who will drive the growth of Wing. The biggest demand still comes from experienced kites, windsurfers and foilers. But the increasing numbers of Wing foiling schools speak of a rising trend in popularity. Many brands expect to see an explosion of total newbies holding on to wings this summer. "We expect a lot of watersports enthusiasts looking for new sports, not necessarily with wind background. Similar to what happened with SUP when it became mainstream", foresees Caren Fobes of NSP. SUP seems to be a good breeding ground. Brands like Airush, Cabrinha and Slingshot expect a lot on influx from SUP. Slingshot is targeting them with a product that allows you to convert your good old SUP board into a Wing one. "Users will paddle when it's flat and grab their wings when it starts blowing, just using their SUP board", announces Wyatt Miller of Slingshot.

"Having kites and windsurfers winging is a big tick!" Joe Taylor, UK North Distributor

WINGS

Some brands are just entering the Wing market, others are launching their 4th generation. But they all seem to be focusing on one main element: versatility. All-round designs that work equally well for different riding abilities and wind conditions. "One-wing-does-all", states Naish's Scott Trudon. There are many design updates from the first. Booms are stiffened, handles recounted and repositioned, and weight recalibrated. The aim is better control and stability. The most obvious result is that riders will be able to use a wing one size smaller than previously for the same wind conditions.

Brands offering one design are Airush, Naish, Norden, NSP and North. Airush's Freeride Air V2 focuses on rigidity, stability, power delivery and weight. It optimised its windows and redesigned the wing tips to prevent drag. Naish's MK3 has refined the curve of the leading edge to maximise drive, balance and stability. Increased diameters in the leading edge and centre strut improve stiffness. The new MK3 offers fewer handles which are better positioned. The new window design makes the wing more functional and safer. Naish will be adding the new Matador to its offering by mid-Summer. It will have a more compact design, suitable for riding waves. North just launched its first wing, the NOVA, for both newcomers and pros. It combines ease of use

with very high performance whether you're jumping, riding waves or doing some all-round wing foiling. NSP offers its Air Wing model in four sizes with more coming in the near future. Surfboard brand Norden has just launched the Seaflight, a wing focused on surf and downwind.

Cabrinha, Gaastra, Slingshot and F-One have two designs on offer. Cabrinha's Crosswing X2 is an update from last year. A new body outline and very rigid inflatable frame allows it to hold its shape under heavy loads or in massive airs. Control is upgraded by separating the inflation of the boom and the leading edge. There is now a double strut system. One mini strut supports the canopy profile and a second boom one boosts ergonomics and wing control. The Mantis is a new rigid but very light design, aimed for surf. Both wings feature a hybrid handle system that allows the rider to find the perfect hand position while riding. Gaastra's second generation delivers the Cross and the Poison. The main updates are a more fine-tuned outline and handle repositioning. The Cross has more handles and a window in the canopy, which makes it ideal for beginners. The Poison is super lightweight and provides more power on the low end, suitable for riding waves. Slingshot is launching its 4th generation of wings. The Dart targets freestyle and powered riding with a bigger wingspan. The SlingWing is aimed for wave, downwind and entry level. F-One delivers the Strike and the Swing V2. The Strike is a performance wing that enables great upwind abilities, high jumps and speed. Stiff and forgiving at the same time, it is a great kit for learners. The Swing V2 will land on the market this Spring and it is a lighter version of the first edition. Duotone has added the new Slick to their existing Unit and Echo designs, with main updates on the boom. The Slick is an all-rounder that works well in waves, downwind, freestyle and freeriding.

Most brands have benefitted from the savoir-faire acquired through years of kite production. As for materials, we will find high tenacity Dacron, Japanese Teijin, and double, triple and nano ripstop in the canopies. Duotone is offering its booms in aluminium or carbon. When it comes to construction, the goal is to achieve a perfect balance of light weight and durability that also enables control.

BOARDS

Multifunctional boards are the key offering for most brands. The ones that offer just one shape have focused on this. Brands that offer many shapes, still find their multi use ones are the most popular. These are great options for new water sports enthusiasts. In this category we find Slingshot's Flying Fish, a sinker board that challenges the paradigm of knee-starts. "A deep water-start is simpler than most people think", states Wyatt Miller. Other multifunctional shapes are Starboard's Winboard 4in1, Cabrinha's X-Fly, Gaastra's Tabou Magic Carpet, JP Australia's X-Foil and North's Swell.

The entry level market is well looked after. SUP boards are popular in this category, as the stability they offer makes the first steps very easy. Here we find Fanatic's Sky SUP, Indiana's Wingfoil, North's Seek, NSP's SUP/Wing foil, the larger sizes of Norden's Futurama range and Slingshot's 143L Shred Sled. Naish's Hover Wingsurf, particularly in its 95L size, works for a wide range of wing sizes, wind strengths and body weights. "Great for learners, so they can progress within this shape", says Scott Trudon.

Experienced riders looking for a more compact design have their offer of shapes too. Cabrinha's Macro, Fanatic's Sky Wing and Sky Surf or Gaastra's Pocket Air are good examples. The Pocket Air is currently offered with a short mast track for windsurf foiling, but we can expect

"We expect a lot of watersports enthusiasts looking for new sports, not necessarily with wind background. Similar to what happened with SUP when it became mainstream" Caren Fobes, NSP

a new version without it at a more attractive price. Norden's smaller sizes of its Futurama range fall into this category too.

Other specific Wing Foiling boards are Starboard's Wingfoil, Cabrinha's Autopilot, Indiana's Pure Wingfoil, JP Australia's X-Winger, NSP's Surf Foil and Slingshot's Wing Craft.

Those looking for travel friendlier options can dip into the inflatable boards' selection. There they will find Fanatic's Sky Air, Indiana's Inflatable Wing foil and F-One's Rocket Air range, which can be used


"Soon we'll see wings for racing, but for now everyone focuses on wings that work well for all riders and are easy to use for newcomers", confirms

Wyatt Miller, Slingshot



with or without a foil.

Most wing foiling boards offer the same sandwich construction as windsurf or SUP boards. A careful selection of materials ensures the right balance of weight, durability and performance. Slingshot sticks to its winning carbon / bamboo / glass layup formula but has reinforced the upper rails on the wing boards. With wing foilers constantly climbing onto their boards from the sides, they identified this area as a high pressure one. NSP uses SLX (super light epoxy) with carbon reinforcements. North has developed its own carbon hybrid technology with high-density dual stringers. This promotes stiffness, making the board more responsive. Naish uses carbon ultra construction on the entire line. It also offers a more affordable option of glass/wood sandwich construction its 110L and 125L sizes. JP Australia also offers its boards in their PRO technology layup or the less pricey IPR one. Gaastra joins in with a choice between PVC sandwich or MTE (Multiaxial Technology Epoxy). Indiana's layup consists of carbon, fibreglass and PVC, the same as Cabrinha's. Fanatic is using its traditional bamboo, but it's also testing new carbon layups. Airush uses LiteTech and offers the more premium Blue Carbon in its Wingfoil design. The Wingboard 4in1 features ASAP construction. It wraps the full rails with thick EVA foam, making the board perfect for schools and little kids.

The progression of the sport is so quick that it's hard to tell where product design will lead. "Soon we'll see wings for racing, but for now everyone focuses on wings that work well for all riders and are easy to use for newcomers", confirms Wyatt Miller. The Wing is so playful and easy to use that we start seeing land-based variations of it. Some people hit the concrete on skateboards. This cold winter in Northern Europe has left images of people flying a wing on a snowboard or even on ice skates. These will not reach the same figures as water-based wing foiling. It is proof that the device is fun and likely to find space in a lot of garages. 

Visit our website to see in depth brand previews of this category.

BOARDSPORTSOURCE.

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Wingfoil consolidates its own fanbase.
- 2 Increasing numbers of newcomers.
- 3 Multi-use wings and boards popular.
- 4 Speedy progression of the sport drives product development.
- 5 Ease of use and fast learning curve drive popularity.



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RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

SUNGLASSES 2021

2021 will be all about rediscovering our world, especially after spending so much time inside. With the high level of education around eye protection now in the market, consumers are understanding the need to protect their eyes from harmful rays, and with innovative lens technology evolving year-on-year, the sunglasses market has the opportunity to thrive in this post-pandemic environment. **By Ruth Cutts.**



Multiplicity is key when it comes to sunglasses design. The overlap between fashion, urban and outdoor is slimmer than ever and, as boardsport consumers are spending extended periods of time outdoors, UV protection, polarisation and photochromy are key assets for them too. "The trend is about making no compromise between great looking styles featuring sport codes and details" explains Alexandre Israel, Global Marketing Manager at Bollé.

Zeal continues to focus on creating designs that incorporate timeless lifestyle shapes with performance attributes in models such as their Divide, Dawn, Lolo and Ande, and Cébé are focusing on their mono-lens styles which bring sporty but also futuristic aesthetics which prove popular with their younger demographic.

Proof Eyewear are introducing the Boise - a timeless style in a slimmer traditional frame which can easily transition from a fashion-forward statement to an everyday necessity.

Inspired by an unapologetic era filled with bold fashion and loud trends, SPY+ have introduced a new development to boardsports eyewear with supra fashion options in their 5050 range, and Vertical Unit are bringing dual functionality with their range of high-tech mountaineering sunglasses that feature a removable sun shield made from super light Swiss-engineered TR90 with a robust anti scratch lens.

FRAME SHAPE

Continuing the theme of multiplicity, VonZipper are striking the balance between super functional frames that are specific to sport and performance, as well as super stylish vintage inspired frames that straddle the function vs fashion realms within their 2021 offering.

Dragon Alliance are widening their women's offerings from one to four styles in 2021, with the addition of three new premium acetate frames which will

"The trend is about making no compromise between great looking styles featuring sport codes and details" - Alexandre Israel, Bollé

greatly impact the brand's scope to a wider audience. They're also noticing a lot of movement in their round/more unisex frames such as their Opus LL which has become a top seller.

For Vertical Unit and Quiksilver round lenses are emerging as a popular theme, and for Bollé squares and rectangles continue to be their bread and butter alongside the introduction of more cat eye shapes within their women's collection.

Roxy are looking to classic frame silhouettes such as aviators and rounded profiles for a timeless and stylish appeal alongside edgier shapes such as cinematic squared, hexagonal and thin retro cat eyes.

FRAME COLOURS & LENS TINTS

Continuing the theme set out in recent seasons, tortoiseshell features heavily across the board. Earthy tones are also proving popular, as is the inevitable continuation of black as the number one staple for most brands.

As a point of difference, Zeal have added pops of colour such as bright oranges, blues and greens within their collection, SPY+ have put a futuristic spin on some of their iconic designs with the introduction of bright and vibrant translucent colour schemes as part of their Glowed Up Collection, and VonZipper, having seen considerable success with loud all-over prints, are introducing clever colour combinations such as their Acid Wash, Cam-OH! And Honeycomb.

As a nod to 2021, the year of the summer Olympics, Oakley's Black and Gold Collection features a variety of models which feature PRIZM 24k polarised lenses and the Oakley logo on the temple in shimmering gold alongside subtle gold metallic accents.

Grey base / smoke lenses continue to be the best-sellers for Dragon and VonZipper, with bronze and copper tones also featuring predominantly for VonZipper, SPY+ and Zeal. A number of brands noted an uplift in the interest in rose tints (VonZipper, Dragon, Zeal, Roxy), likely due to a growing female consumer within the industry.

MATERIALS & INNOVATIONS

When it comes to functionality, boardsports consumers are needed sunglasses that provide long-term protection, are lightweight in nature and provide uncompromised grip. Red Bull SPECT Eyewear have included their innovative WING Dual Temple System within a number of their models to provide secure grip. By moving a small slider on the temple, a second temple extends out and wraps around the ear to ensure that the sunglasses sit firmly on the face.

For 2021, Cébé has created the S'Track 2.0 featuring their unique S'Tech™ technology. Engineered with a spatula on the inside of each temple curving to a v-shape, it creates two additional contact points resulting in a better balance of the weight of the sunglasses and ensures a perfect hold on the face.

Specially designed for the needs of women, Oakley's Leadline model features a timeless silhouette combined with optimised coverage, whilst the frame's functional design increases field of view and impact protection. Earsocks moulded to the temples help provide all day comfort and excellent retention.

SUSTAINABILITY

The last year has really made people focus on what they purchase, and why they need items, and one of the biggest trends evolving is consumers becoming more conscious of the impacts of their purchases. "The consumer mindset is changing and retailers that do not adapt and move towards truly ethical brands and products will be left behind and lose their appeal with their increasingly conscious customer" explains Dewerstone's Sustainability Manager Stuart Watson.

As a brand that is built on the environment and landscapes they love to play in, Dewerstone's Bantham collection features wooden and plant-based acetate frames with quality polarised lenses. Built for the beach and long days in the sun, the Bantham collection uses materials that are both sustainable and stylish. "Where there are choices to be made, we consider both people and planet, as well as profit" continues Watson.

Zeal's biggest focus for 2021 is their new See Grass collection, a new frame material that combines 70% recycled plastics and 30% grass fibres in a closed-loop system to create their most sustainable sunglasses yet. This fibrous base is combined with recycled plastics to reuse waste material and keep it out of landfills.

Nearly two-thirds of the Dragon sunwear line is made from G850, a plant-based pellet that is sustainably sourced or Recycled PET, made from recycled



"The consumer mindset is changing and retailers that do not adapt and move towards truly ethical brands and products will be left behind and lose their appeal with their increasingly conscious customer"

- Stuart Watson, Dewerstone

water bottles. Constantly researching new ways to achieve quality products while mitigating their impact on the environment, 2021 sees Dragon expand further in the aforementioned Recycled PET (rPET) space, with two new shapes (the Finch and the Wilder).

Proof Eyewear's Ontario is handcrafted & assembled from sustainably sourced wood, Sinner's CX collection is produced in an environmentally friendly way and contains no harmful BPA, whilst Sinner's main frame material used throughout the sun line is their Evolve eco-friendly material made from castor-oil-based resin to help in the cause to reduce fossil fuel consumption. In 2021, Sinner are also focusing on growing their CORE sunglass line which features frames made out of recycled plastic bottles (rPET).

Taking their sustainable practices beyond the product itself, Cébé are launching new packaging made from kraft to aid the elimination of the plastic polybag in their chain.

LENS TECHNOLOGIES

When it comes to manufacturing lenses, sub-par clarity simply won't cut it in 2021.

Bollé's Volt + is a new revolutionary high contrast lens developed using artificial intelligence to push the boundaries of what's possible. The result is a lens with a level of colour enhancement which has never been reached before. More than 20 million possibilities have been evaluated by the algorithm, to find the formula that offers an incomparable experience.

Otis are using mineral glass (sand, carbonate, sodium) to eliminate distortions and make their lenses scratch resistant, Dewerstone feature ZEISS LightPro Technology® in their top tier models for crystal clear, sharp vision, and Dirty Dog's Photo+ lens offers photo-chromic properties to ensure that the wearer has an optimal vision in whatever conditions they face.

Sinner's polarised SINTEC® lenses not only eliminate high energy of blue light and filter 100% UV light, this lens technology is a combination of colour highlight and colour contrast to provide high clarity, high contrast, enhanced details and are comfortable to your eyes.

SPY +s Happy Lens is the only colour and contrast enhancing lens on the market that harnesses the beneficial aspects of long-wave blue light while offering protection from damaging short-wave blue light.

Quiksilver's SLASH lens encompasses features such as anti-fog, HD lens for contrast, ventilation holes, hydro and oleo phobic treatments, and photochromic technology to adapt to differing light conditions to have the best functionality for snowboarding,

Dragon's overarching lens technology is Lumalens; a colour optimisation for specific lens tints and environments that helps to bring out clarity and depth perception, while reducing eye fatigue. Whilst Smith's ChromaPop technology also provides sharper colour perception and better optics through the use of dyes to selectively filter light in the confusion areas on the visible light spectrum.

SUNGLASSES PROTECTION

Although gogglesoc is well known in the winter sports industry for their flagship goggle covers, 2021 sees the brand introducing their latest product line sunnysoc – the protective pouch for sunglasses. A combination of function with fashion at a reasonable price point and with the environment in mind, they've created a smart and attractive alternative to the ordinary sunglasses case. It's lightweight and protects your sunnies in style, allowing you to stuff, chuck, drop and experience worry free. Taking the fabric technology applied to gogglesoc and extending it to this line, sunnysocs are made with 94% rPET (recycled plastic bottles) and 6% spandex (for optimum stretch). Each sunnysoc is packaged with an informative insert made from recycled (and recyclable) paper, alongside a handy carabiner, poppy clasp and built-in lens cleaning cloth. ⑤

Visit our website to see in depth brand previews of this category.

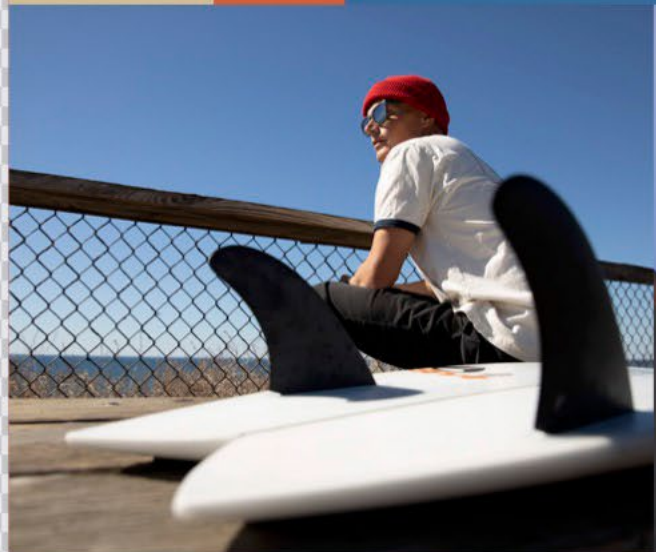
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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Post-pandemic desire for outdoors is promising
- 2 Uplift in rose tints
- 3 Crossover frames integral to crossover markets
- 4 Technologies evolving for long-lasting grip



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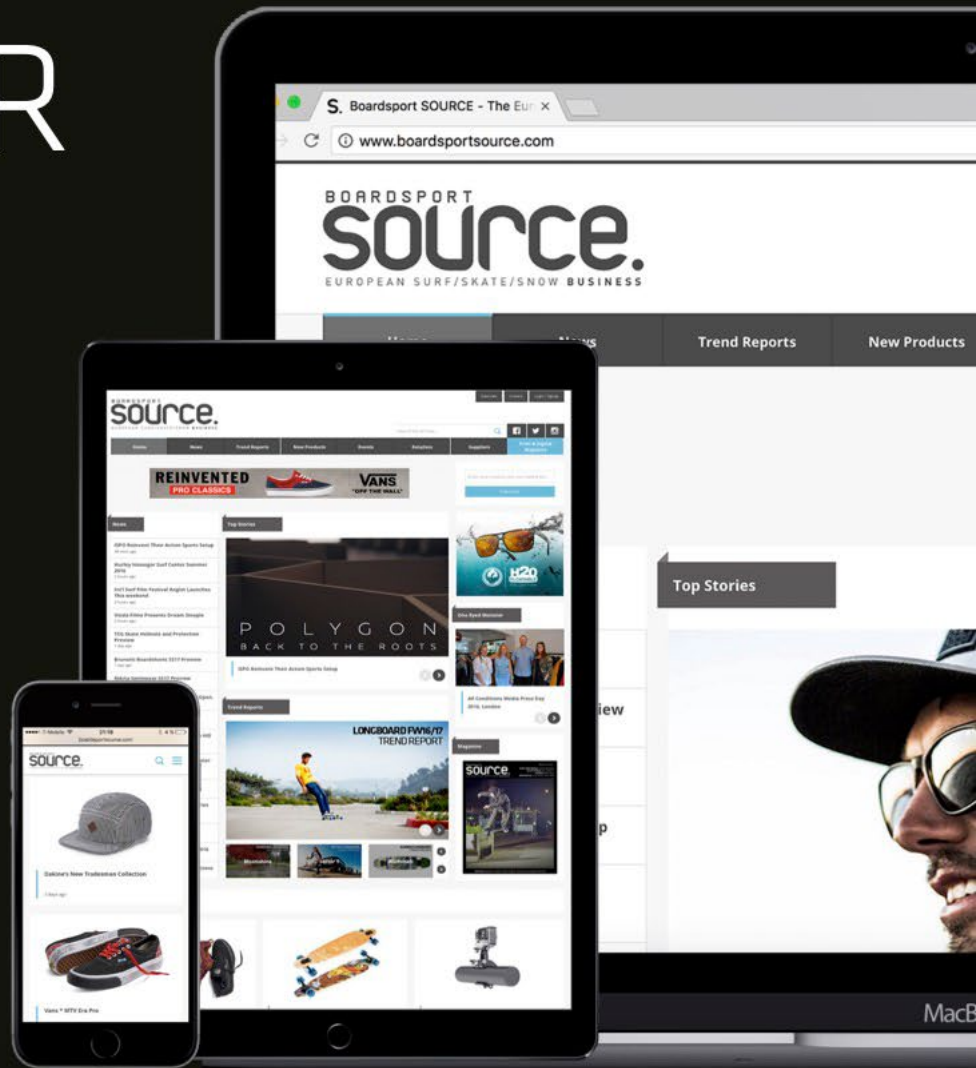


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Carve - Icon



Carve - Voyager



Cebe - Asphalt



Cebe - Oreste



Cebe - Strack



Cheapo - Bodhi



Cheapo - Henrik



Cheapo - Rickard



Dewerstone - Bantham



Dewerstone - Sumbawa



Dewerstone - Tambora



Dirty Dog - Muffler



Dirty Dog - Ranger



Dirty Dog - Sneak



Dragon - Meridien



Dragon - Opus



Dragon - Renew



Gloryfy - G19 Gold



Gloryfy - Gi15 St. Pauli



Gloryfy - Gi33 Barcelona



Horsefeathers - Chloe



Horsefeathers - Merlin



Horsefeathers - Zenith



Melon - Alleycat



Melon - Kingpin



Melon - Layback 2

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Spy - Helm



Von Zipper - The Esker



Von Zipper - The Fawn



Von Zipper - The Mode



Zeal Optics - Dawn



Zeal Optics - Divide



Zeal Optics - Lolo



Gogglesoc - Hawaii



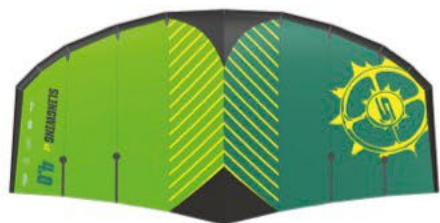
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RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

KITEBOARDING 2021

A year of restrictions has left kiteboarders hungry for ocean time and all-conditions, all-styles riding. Foils and considerably lighter kites and boards have made it happen. Retailers' main concern will be to keep their shelves stocked. **By Rocio Enriquez.**



2020 and 2021 will be remembered as the years of the Pandemic. Kiteboarders will also remember them as the years of the foil. Shortly after the first riders were spotted hovering over the sea, the acceptance has been complete. Experienced kites welcome the increased number of days in the water that foil provides. Being able to practice in less windy conditions also makes the sport more accessible, attracting big numbers of newcomers. "There's a hype in new people entering the sport, schools are fully booked", says Philipp Becker of Duotone. The industry has been paying proper attention and reacting at speed. The offer in foil kit has been instant, flying off the shelves and restocked with implemented innovations in barely two seasons. Alex Fox of Slingshot shares: "We have grown our product development team and our kite design team by almost 30%". Everything points to a sustained rising interest in foil. We can surely expect some interesting launches by Summer.

A side effect of the pandemic was forcing people to make the most of their local spots. This meant being able to kite in any wind conditions. It also meant adapting to different disciplines to make the most of the conditions served on the day. The natural response to this was to make gear that is lighter and can perform in light wind conditions. It also put the focus on versatility. "The 'desert island' kite will be the big winner", foresees Joe Taylor of North. Having an all-round quiver that performs in any conditions and all disciplines will prove useful when travel bans are lifted too. It will allow riders to travel to many different spots with just one piece of kit.

"There's a hype in new people entering the sport, schools are fully booked" - Philipp Becker, Duotone

Most brands report their biggest growth in foiling and multi-purpose gear, followed by Big Air. The new lighter materials and innovative designs are enabling higher jumps. This attracts a lot of talent who constantly pushes the limits. The surf category also remains quite well looked after. The pleasure of riding waves remains one few kite boarders will pass on.

KITES

A light kite is the key to all-condition and foil riding, but this must be achieved without compromising strength. There is a global quest for lighter yet more rigid and stronger materials. "The whole industry including us is trying to make Aluula materials work", says Philipp Becker, Duotone. Any innovation in this area is well-received by customers. "The supplier who finds the best balance will be rich", says Christophe Hesina of Fly Surfer. Naish's main focus is to reduce the overall weight of the kites yet keeping them strong in the key areas. Duotone's SLS construction (Strong Light Superior) featuring the new Penta TX material made it to their best sellers immediately. Eleveight adjusted the overall weight across their entire range. The new XT Light material made the inflatable structures 15% lighter. Fly Surfer introduced the TX Light fabric, with an extra ripstop thread



that provides more tearing strength. Slingshot's RPX kite has a very strong and thin bridle line. It is 25% thinner yet extremely static, resulting in a faster kite with less drag. North's Orbit and Carve kites have replaced the Dacron in the canopy for a new heavy-duty, lighter reinforcement material. The result is a lighter and more responsive kite.

Versatility is rewarded. Not only in wind conditions, but also in riding disciplines and abilities. Kites that will allow you to foil, jump or ride waves, and that will enable you to progress your riding, are flying off the shelves. Lighter, stiffer materials are paired with designs that are as technical as easy to use. One strut kites are popular and new strut-less designs start making an appearance. Nobile is having a great response to the One kite launched last Summer, a one strut design excellent for light wind and foiling. Cabrinha added the Contra 1S to their Contra range of three strut kites. Smaller sizes

"We have grown our product development team and our kite design team by almost 30%"

Alex Fox, Slingshot

of the range were re-designed to one strut to fit foil riding. Gaastra added smaller sizes to their popular One kite, to provide a super light kite for foil. Slingshot launched the UFO, a bold strut-less design and one of their most polarising innovations. "Larger brands were wary to release a strut-less model. We took the risk and were rewarded", says Alex Fox.

Innovation does not stop at materials and number of struts, though. In a time when kiteboarders are used to constant technological advancements pushing the sport, design is constantly re-thought. New shapes and new production processes are tested and applied. Duotone has created DLab, a program in which designers can try in any direction unrestricted by costs. Cabrinha has re-shaped its Moto kite with a new profile and reduced coning, making it fly faster. They have also implemented other changes throughout the range. Adjustments to the closing seams avoid material build up and improve precision of assembly. Bladder repositioning avoids its herniation in pointy geometries. OQC laser measurement checks

symmetry before packing. Gaastra's IQ kite has wider tips, a newly balanced leading-edge diameter and less profile on the tip section. These improve turning speed, drift ability and provide a more direct steering. Their AR kite has a higher aspect ratio and adjusted profile alignment. The Pure kite has a progressive arc design with a stiffer feeling that provides a homogeneous power distribution across the entire depower range. North has given their Orbit and Carve kites new bridles. They provide a very direct feel in both bar pressure and steering. The more intuitive feedback from the bar in both directions helps you always know where your kite is. Also, the new bridle lines are preloaded and measured before cutting to improve accuracy and consistency. This not only enables more responsive turns, but it also reduces shrinkage and improves longevity.

BOARDS

Crossover boards that allow you to try different disciplines are a customer's favourite, especially if the options include foil. This segment is getting a lot of attention from designers. The possibility of progressing your riding skills without having to change the board is a bonus. If it is lighter and durable too, then you've struck gold. This seems to be the trinity that all makers pursue.

Gaastra has experienced their best sales with the Watts board. This is an all-rounder twin tip that works equally well for advanced riders and less experienced ones. For Lieuwe Boards it was the Shotgun, their "jack of all trades" board. Nobile's Split Board range keeps growing and its NHP Split Foil has been very well-received. "Our NHP Split Foil is a split twin tip that is foil convertible. It covers all conditions and fits in your check-in luggage", says Jan Korycki. North's Atmos Hybrid has topped their sales since launch. This all-rounder works particularly well for big air and freeride and is used by beginners and pros. Its evolution, the Astra twin tip, offers a more responsive flex for smaller build riders.

There is lots of tweaking and refining going on in constructions. The race for providing the lightest and best performing board is on, and everybody is running. Twin Tips get special attention. "We dialled the constructions and materials of our twin tips to make them durable and light", says Scott Trudon of Naish. Cabrinha has incorporated a lighter carbon cloth to its twin tips that is doubled to match the previous weight. This reduces the risk of bubbles in the laminate and increases performance. The X:Caliber offered in wood and carbon has new aggressive tip channels that meet demands of big air and freestyle. It provides a more aggressive take off, whether

from flat water or from a wave. Eleveight has designed a new grab handle system that allows the rider to change the rocker and flex on the fly with just one little turn. Goodboards has launched the PRO version of their best-selling Amnesia board. All PRO versions come now with a Boomtag's NFC chip incorporated in the handle area, which allows you to get your board back if you lose it. Nobile is using high quality poplar wood for their cores. The newly released Game Changer for freestyle and wake style features large rocker deep channels and small fins. North gave their boards new tip shapes for increased durability and new composite fins. The flex bindings were also reworked with a softer and thinner strap that allows your foot to shuffle back more easily into a locked-in position. Slingshot has had great success with their Formula V1, the lightest twin tip they ever made. Their IT board combines two different strength carbon fibres, providing more stiffness and an explosive pop, while keeping it light. Duotone's SLS series is offering quite versatile, light and durable boards, both in twin tips and surf shapes.

Surfboards get their share of love from product developers too. Cabrinha has added two more constructions to their existing bamboo one. The PRO construction makes lighter and more responsive surfboards. The lightweight EPS core is reinforced with a high-density, honeycomb sandwich layer. Strategic UD carbon strips add reinforcement and provide more control flex. This is a strapless use only board, so do not expect to find any foot strap plugs in it. The Autopilot construction features a light EPS core, reinforced with fibreglass and carbon innegra. Strategic carbon stringers are added for reinforcement. Also strapless dedicated is F-One's Magnet Carbon launched last Spring. Its unique, slim tech construction is light but also very resistant to harsh landings. F-One also offers three different constructions, to suit all rider's budgets and needs. Slingshot's choice for strapless is the SciFy XR. This is an all-round short surfboard that has quickly become a team and customer's favourite, thanks to the lightweight construction and premium performance. Duotone announces surprises in their surfboard offering, with the range currently being tweaked to offer a DLab limited edition.

SUSTAINABILITY

Strict quality standards and mostly Asia-based manufacturing challenge sustainability in kiteboarding. Still, brands strive to make improvements wherever possible. "It's the small details in production, design and distribution that hopefully add up to some bigger impact", says Konstantin Weier. Most efforts are seen in packaging, product durability, board wood cores, manufacturing processes and transport.

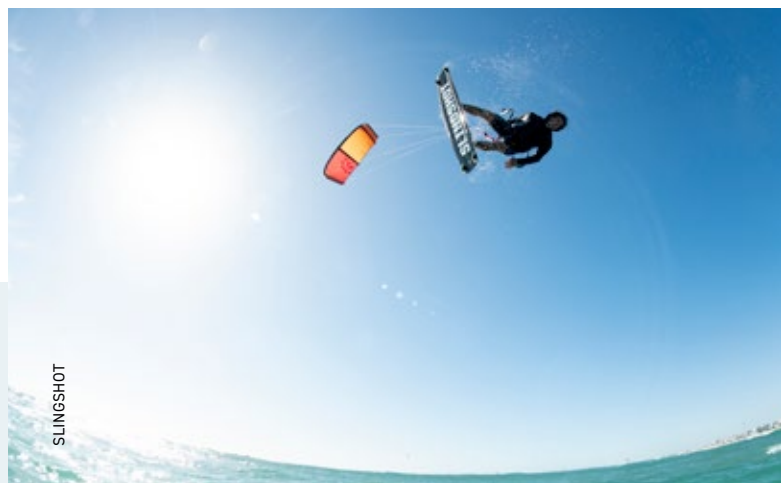
Cabrinha is using FlexiHex® packaging for their boards. This packaging can be reused by the customer when travelling, so it helps reduce waste. Duotone is using recycled carton packaging where possible, and if something needs plastic, it's the recycled kind. North ships all boards without plastic packaging and is using recycled PET 300D in their kite bags. Slingshot's surf, foil and wake surf boards are free from plastic packaging too. Naish and Eleveight are also reducing their packaging.

Making durable products is probably one of the most sustainable practices. It avoids waste and over production. Lieuwe's practice

"Our NHP Split Foil is a split twin tip that is foil convertible. It covers all conditions and fits in your check-in luggage." Jan Korycki, Nobile

of not making changes to boards that work well falls into this philosophy. Keeping the same boards for a longer period increases the resale and the stock value. Eleveight works with leading raw material suppliers to secure the highest quality. For F-One, durability of the products is the priority, keeping away from planned obsolescence. Fly Surfer pays good attention to the supply chain, to make sure their products are built to last.

"It's the small details in production, design and distribution that hopefully add up to some bigger impact" Konstantin Weier, Gaastra



Wood is one of the few materials used in kiteboarding production that offers reliable, environmentally friendly options. Duotone, Nobile and Slingshot use sustainable woods on their boards. Nobile's wood is FCS certified. They keep their eyes peeled for the most eco-friendly woods, as well as least harming glues and hardeners. Slingshot sources their wood from the Forest Stewardship Council. These are responsibly managed forests that provide environmental, social and economic benefits.

Eco alternatives to materials are continuously tested for quality standards. Reducing waste is also a focus. Fly Surfer uses an on-demand system that avoids over production. Gaastra uses as much of the raw material as possible. Production is moved to Europe whenever possible, to shorten transportation. Factories are using more green energy.

RETAILER SUPPORT

It is a complicated time for retailers. Support is more important than ever. Yet, the pandemic restrictions have not allowed key forms of support to happen. It's the case of beach demo days or dealers' meetings. Some brands, such as F-One, have offered virtual versions. Most brands have had to rely on good education through digital channels. But the most important one has been customised support for each retailer. "An individual solution is often the most effective way", says Oliver Spang of Cabrinha. Stock has presented some challenges, so retailers have appreciated practices that made this easier. Duotone makes sure to always have the right products on stock. Gaastra sends automatic updates of stock levels, directly linked to their warehouse system and online shop. Keeping part of the line unchanged gives retailers more time to sell the product at full price.

With lots of innovations served by the day, and lots of people craving for the freedom of the open ocean, the kiteboarding industry seems like a good one to be in. ☺

Visit our website to see in depth brand previews of this category.

BOARDSPORTSOURCE.COM

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Light wind kiting gear on demand
- 2 One kite / one board quiver mentality
- 3 Light yet strong designs pursued
- 4 Sustainability efforts in packaging and production
- 5 Customised retailer support

SKATEBOARDS BY
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SPRING 2021 COLLECTION



ABSTRACT



AZUL



CHROMA



GALAXY



GLITCH



TOTEM

RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

LONGBOARDS 2021

After a year of booming sales, where is the longboard market headed from here? Insights from endemic brands in our 2021 Longboards Retail Buyer's Guide by SOURCE Editor Dirk Vogel.



The summer of 2020 will forever be remembered as the long summer of Covid-19. But at the same time, also as the Summer of Skateboarding, because hardware of all kinds – especially longboards and cruisers – met surging demand amid wide-spread lockdown measures. “Because of the pandemic and the fact that people can’t practice collective sports, cannot go to the swimming pool and the like, they are discovering activities such as longboarding,” said Josh Barrow, EU Marketing Manager at Globe. At Arbor Skateboards, Louis Pilloni, Global Marketing Manager, also sees “rising interest in outside activities, hobbies, sports, and lifestyles. Skateboarding caters to all these interests with longboard skateboarding drawing a lot of new potential customers to the market as it is accessible in most areas and while naturally social distancing yourself while participating.”

This massive interest has boosted sales beyond expectations. “We have seen for decades that the European skate market usually follows a curve of five years rising in popularity, and five years falling again. And so, it repeats. We are clearly in the rise, and at the same time have new generations of skaters and girls that were not here before,” said Miller Division’s product manager Ivan Garcia Arozamena. Recent industry statistics confirm this trend: The global Skateboard market size is expected to reach \$171.2 million by 2025, up from \$158.7 million in 2019 (360MarketUpdates). “Demand for all types of boards remains high everywhere. We’re still seeing a lot of new skaters enter the market, and longboards are a good starting point,” said Shane Maloney, Brand Manager at Madrid Skateboards.

From a geographic perspective, Pablo Castro at Loaded Boards and Orangatang Wheels said: “It’s hard to compare regions since demand is strong everywhere and supply is limited.” But Liam Morgan at Prism Skate Co. said: “I would say that Europe is currently looking stronger than the US in terms of post-Covid growth.” And ‘strong’ might be an understatement, as Dave Price at Landyachtz said: “One long term partner recently told me that this is ‘the biggest and fastest growth he’s ever seen’ in his more than 30 years in the skateboard industry. The appetite of the market is currently

“Because of the pandemic and the fact that people can’t practice collective sports, cannot go to the swimming pool and the like, they are discovering activities such as longboarding,”

Josh Barrow, Globe

outpacing our ability to supply, and this is with all brands.”

SUPPLY AND RETAIL SITUATION

As last season clearly showed, supply will remain a constant challenge. Brands in this report pointed out shortages, especially in trucks and wheels. Meanwhile, deck supply seems more stable, especially for brands who manufacture in-house as opposed to overseas. Nevertheless, the situation requires long-term planning on behalf of brands and retailers. “The negative part has been to pre-order clients earlier than normal, even 6-8 months before the date,” said Ivan at Miller. Many brands create special conditions for board shops, for instance HOFF Distribution: “We help all the retailers by offering payment conditions. We know that most of them suffered because of the situation,” said Benoit Brecq at HOFF Distribution (Flying Wheels). Arbor even went as far as shutting down its direct-to-consumer website sales to save inventory for core shops. “Skate Shops lay the foundation for the local skateboard community and it is vital to support them to help keep the market sustainable,” said Louis Pilloni. With that said, retailers need to get their orders in early, so here are the main season trends to look out for in 2021.

1. LOONG LONGBOARDS

As the pendulum swings, last season was marked by a trend towards shorter, stubbier longboards. Well, not anymore! “We’re seeing a trend on boards

which are a bit longer than before; there is a big demand on longboards longer than 32 inches compared to last year," said Josh at Globe. Louis at Arbor confirmed: "Overall there is an increase of demand for 35 inches or longer cruisers as they are the best entry level boards to learn how to ride." Boosted by the urban mobility movements, longer boards with large, soft wheels offer a convenient and efficient way to cover some ground without relying on cars.

2. "CRAZY" SHAPES

Unconventional shapes have been making waves in 'regular' skateboard line-ups for the past five years. Now the trend trickles into the longboard segment. "Trends are new shapes and unusual shapes," said Dave at Landyachtz. Look for boards with ridges and eye-catching features like fishtails or pointed nose sections. Speaking from a design perspective, Ivan at Miller said: "As a rule we think that you have to be comfortable on a skateboard. This means generous tails but without going overboard. Extra width for large riders, and narrower for boys or girls with smaller feet and measurements." Retro shapes are also trending, so look out for models like Classic Pro Skate (Madrid), Dagger (DB Boards), Fish (Arbor), Palomar (Flying Wheels), Future Killer (Rayne), Moto Cosmic (Dusters California).

3. PROVEN CONSTRUCTIONS

While shapes are getting experimental, board constructions veer towards proven ground. Asked about the main board genre for 2021, Shane at Madrid pointed out: "For longboards we still see drop-thru symmetrical style boards as the most popular option." Dusters California delivers a stunner with the California Ocean Lovers, a double drop shape with an '80s-inspired graphic. In terms of the other three main trending categories, Dave at Landyachtz hits it on the head: "We've expanded our Surf-Skate line-up with much success and introduced some new boards in the Downhill/freeride and ATV categories." At Rayne, designer Timothy Mackey said: "We're focusing on ergonomics and fully fibre-glassed tops and bottoms. Another Pro board is in the works for this summer!"

"We have seen for decades that the European skate market usually follows a curve of five years rising in popularity, and five years falling again. And so, it repeats. We are clearly in the rise, and at the same time have new generations of skaters and girls that were not here before."

Ivan Garcia Arozamena, Miller Division



MADRID

"I would say that Europe is currently looking stronger than the US in terms of post-Covid growth."

Liam Morgan, Prism Skate Co

4. SUSTAINABLE FOCUS

Behind the scenes, brands are moving towards more eco-friendly manufacturing and 'greener' overall supply chains. All the while, and this is important, without raising price points. Pablo at Loaded Boards shares their process: "We've transitioned the majority of our composite decks to Entropy Super Sap bio resin. We're also using basalt extensively as an alternative to fiberglass whenever appropriate." Desiree Moore, Marketing Director at Dusters California said: "Our Regrowth Sustainability Mission includes a partnership with National Forest Foundation to replant one tree for every tree used to make skateboards." Miller has been attaining FSC seal for their manufactured wood products. The Arbor 'Returning Roots' program, "donates a portion of every sale to the restoration and preservation of endangered forest and we are a proud member of the Conservation Alliance."

5. SURF SKATE

Putting a finger on another season trend, Dave at Landyachtz said: "Surf Skating appears to be taking off massively in certain markets." At Jucker Hawaii, head honcho Mike Jucker is on the same page: "Skate surfing is a big theme for 2021 and the future. Surfing being Olympic and more wave pools opening all over the world." Apparently, Thailand is hot for surf skate right now, but Europe is also reaching a new peak. Benoit at Flying Wheels outlined four specific inventions to target this segment: Portland and Lombard baseplate to replicate the sensation of surfing, also STR Trucks as double truck technology with classic finish and the Capitol Trucks in the retro surf range. Ivan at Miller recommends their Surf Truck as an update: "You can always mount them on your old cruiser or wide skate deck and quickly turn it into a surf skate!"

6. INSPIRED ART

Aside from their elaborate and technical constructions (see 3.), boards are increasingly differentiated by their artwork. Brands are going to lengths, enlisting gifted artist for board graphics, including Globe: "In our new Geminon Series we've teamed up with artist Sterling Bartlett on our Spearpoint & Bannerstone longboard to immerse you in a picturesque slice of California frozen in time." Dusters California also has some far-out vibes instore with the Moto Cosmic Longboard, featuring a holographic effect on top and bottom graphics. DB Boards keeps the graphics fresh across various new shapes, while Arbor cultivates that organic, wood-grain feeling. At Gravity Skateboards, Marketing Manager Hans Fredricks is all about "a lot more animal, fish and bird themes." With so much art, the only question is whether to hang decks on the wall or ride them?

7. RARE HARDWARE

When it comes to trucks and wheels, the game has changed according to Dave at Landyachtz: "We have been forced to plan two to three years out now, as opposed to 4-6 months or so previously. The demand for trucks and wheels has simply outpaced the industry's ability to produce those products." Nevertheless, innovation and product development are on point in 2021. As Shane at Madrid promised: "There will be two new lines of wheels from Skate Blood Orange and a really badass new truck coming from Caliber Truck Co. that has been in the works for years." Andy King at Mindless announced a new Gen X Truck for this season, while Mike Jucker has the Precision 1 Longboard Truck in store. Timothy at Rayne said: "The Envy wheel by Rayne will be stocked in multiple new colours for the 2021 season with an awesomethane-dumping, transparent formula." Arbor has cooked up six new wheel designs based on rider feedback. Benoit at HOFF is pushing the Portland baseplate as an instant surf skate converter (see 5.), while new wheel innovations will hit the Forward, Gyro, Climax and Bumper lines by Flying Wheels. Overall, Tim at DB Boards advises retailers: "Get wheels and trucks while you can! They won't last long here."

With that said, here's to another epic summer for longboarding – and skateboarding altogether. Because the lines between 'segments' are blurring. One indicator is the fact that brands like Arbor have expanded their 'regular' board collections, for instance by signing big ticket pro riders like Greyson Fletcher. As part of the evolution, longboards have become a 'normal' part of skateboarding, said Liam at Prism: "People seem to accept bigger boards these days whereas before riding a big board could be considered lame. Customers are longboarders and proud!" ☺

Visit our website to see in depth brand previews of this category.

BOARDSPORTSOURCE.

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 High demand for skateboards
- 2 Stabilized supply situation
- 3 Longer boards
- 4 New (surf) truck designs
- 5 Retro style decks
- 6 Shortage in hardware (wheels, trucks)
- 7 Intricate deck artwork

millert



Backside Nollie 180 transfer

Lake Elsinore, CA

Photo: David Swift



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BIG WIG INTERVIEW OXBOW'S EMMANUEL DEBRUÈRES



Emmanuel Debruères and Jean-Christophe Chetail acquired French heritage surf and snow brand Oxbow from Lafuma (Calida group) under their company Rainbow SAS just days before the Covid pandemic struck Europe in February 2020.

Oxbow has a storied history within the boardsports industry going back some 35 years, sponsoring big surf events and some of the best surfers on the planet. We speak with Emmanuel Debruères, their new CEO for this issue's Big Wig interview about their positioning and brand strategy and to find out how the first 12 months have progressed. Debruères is an industry vet having held senior positions at Billabong, Rossignol, Dakine and Salomon as well as a stint with premium outdoor sports group Idealp.

You have been in the boardsports industry for many years. Please give us an overview of your career.

From 2002-2010, I worked as a product manager in charge of snowboard and technical products (hardware & software) at Salomon, Rossignol and Billabong. Then I moved to Dakine as a European brand manager for 3 years and then onto the US in 2015 to take the position of Dakine global VP marketing in Hood River – Oregon. And then I came back to France to lead the new European office located in Annecy. I spent a few years as a GM and partner At Idealp group (Lacroix, Henri DUVILLARD, Degré7, Arpin). And in June 2020, I embarked on my latest venture, as owner and president of Oxbow.

Please tell us about the new management team behind Oxbow.

Since we took it over, we decided to capitalize on the current management team. The team is up and running, they all know their jobs and are experts in their field. The team is used to working together and facing all sorts of challenging situations. The company is well structured with managers from the sports industry, but we also have the chance to enlist people from various businesses that bring a different point of view and experiences. One of the reasons why Oxbow is successful is definitely the quality of our back office. I've never seen such good customer services, buying department and finance department, committed and high performing!

One of the reasons why Oxbow is successful is definitely the quality of our back office. I've never seen such good customer services, buying department and finance department, committed and high performing!

We have been able to maintain a very high level of trust from our suppliers and customers even during the crisis because we have always found solutions to support them. We have been on time with deliveries, bringing fresh products to the market, investing in our own shops for refits and improvements, onboarding riders and developing marketing initiatives.

You sent your offer for Oxbow to Lafuma in February 2020, on the verge of the pandemic. Did the following lockdowns/shutdowns impact on the purchasing process?

Of course, the pandemic redefined the initial deal to financially secure the first years of our project. Calida and us have ensured that even with the lack of visibility regarding the business, the project would be secure and strong enough to fit with our ambitions. As smart people all together, we came up with an agreement that makes Oxbow financially strong enough to face the crisis and be

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one of the strongest brands after it. We always had and still have the full support of Calida in our adventure with Oxbow, as they continue to successfully run our logistics and IT. The main target for us as investors is really to allocate as much resources as possible to the company to develop as a brand. We will be one of the only action sport brands with no debt after the crisis. Financially speaking, cash is key to growth, that's why we made sure to have enough to achieve our plans.

Over the last few decades Oxbow's brand position has changed, from the core audience to a mainstream label, and then back again to a core yet casual image. Which brand values are you aiming to promote from now on?

We totally assumed the current brand positioning. As you say, Oxbow is not so core... and that's fine because our business is strong as it is. However, at Oxbow we are all passionate about action sports; we all surf, ski or snowboard and we want to reconnect the brand with these sports more than before. On top of the lifestyle collection, we give ourselves the opportunity to also develop functional products that will allow all Oxbow fans to spend more days in the water or on the snow and have a lot of fun. Oxbow is a 35-year-old French outdoor brand with its own DNA. The brand is known all over the world and has played a major role in the progressive outdoor history. Oxbow heritage is huge, including legendary athletes (Laird Hamilton, Gary Elkerton, Robbie Page, Kai Lenny, Joel Tudor, Jean Nerva, Patrick Edlinger, JM Bayle) who rode for us in the past as well as the amazing events (World Masters Tavarua, World Championships Biarritz). We want to focus and emphasize on sport, environment, fun and sharing (family and friends).

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And why have you chosen this positioning?

That's what we believe in! We are private investors that want to run the business according to our fundamental beliefs (passion, hard work, trust and respect), no crazy financial strategy to make the most money possible, killing the brand after 5/7 years. We are independent and therefore will run the business responsibly. We are just following our passion for outdoor and action sports and so we will apply as much common sense and respect as possible. We are convinced that we have to be true and honest to succeed. Our biggest chance is to have our destiny in our hands, every decision good or bad is ours, there is no one else to blame. This feeling of freedom is so good and gives us the chance to focus on our brand, our people and our passions.

The new motto under the brand's new ownership is "Oxbow become French again". How important is the relationship with France as part of the brand's strengths?

Oxbow is French and we are proud of it. The main reason is that the French action sports scene (brands, riders, events, playgrounds...) is totally legit and was very rich from day one. Our mountains and beaches are among the best in the world to surf and snowboard or ski, our culture and lifestyle makes everyone else jealous. Thanks to our French heritage we know how to make good quality and sophisticated products upgraded by years of history - that's what we want to put in our consumer's hands. France is a reference in the world for freedom, environment and culture, which are just more reasons to emphasize Oxbow being French.

Which surf product categories are strongest for the brand?

T-shirts and boardshorts are the key business categories due to the history of the brand.

As any other brand in the business, Oxbow has been hit by the COVID shutdown. How has this affected the company's future strategic plans (local sourcing/manufacturing, online sales vs. brick & mortar, telecommuting etc)?

The strategy we set up from the start of the project already included all the changes that are now necessary due to the crisis. We will be producing products in France and in Europe soon. The environment was and always will be a deep value at Oxbow. E-comm is a key pillar of our sales strategy and that's why Oxbow will have a brand-new website/e-comm platform in the next few weeks. Physical shops and retailers are also a big part of our business and we want to keep pushing our collaboration with them. It's important for us to keep a strong connection with our consumers in reality. People want to touch and try the products, they want to share and ask questions, they want to have a brand experience that is more than just buying a product, they want to buy a legendary brand. We firmly believe that all channels are complementary to offer better service to our consumers.

How do you see the surf market developing over the next few years?

The market will keep developing as it's easy to do, fun, healthy and there will always be waves. I hope that a lot of brands will survive the current crisis to keep investing in marketing to promote surfing, as we need to be strong together to keep people dreaming about our sports in organizing events, sponsoring riders and creating amazing content that only core brands are able to do. As a brand, we also need to support our core retailers selling technical products (wetsuits & surfboards) as they are the best windows for the brands and the sport.

How are you working with retailers to push the brand and product?

It's all about trust. Every season we commit to retailers a certain level of sales turnover with Oxbow products and that's the reason why they place an order with us. Then we have to deliver what we promised: the right products, right price, on time, answer any questions and fix any problems. We have to support all our retailers as much as we can to make sure they will put our products in the customer's hands with the right advice and make them benefit from their experience.

How will surfing's inclusion in the Olympics for the first-time impact on your brand marketing?

Nothing. First of all, surfing has nothing to do with the Olympics. Secondly, Oxbow is not into competitions at all, we prefer to emphasize on freedom, fun and friends. Surfing is much more than a sport; it is a lifestyle.

Outside of France which are your key markets?

Oxbow benefits from a strong brand awareness thanks to years of sports marketing including some of the best riders and events worldwide. Our plan is to increase our business with Europe as a starting point and North America as a longer plan. Due to our deep experience and knowledge of exports, my partner and I know how much resources we have to dedicate to this project either in terms of back office or in sales and marketing structure. We have decided to start with Spain and Benelux to make it easier as Spain is next door and Benelux was one of the biggest businesses for Oxbow back in the day. Our E-comm is also a powerful tool to sell outside of France. Our new e-comm site will give us the chance to sell products anywhere in Europe from next September on. ©



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RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

SUP 2021

The summer is not even here yet and all the 2021 SUPs are presold. Have you made the right choices with your orders? Here are the brands to take you through the SUP trends in this time of the New Normal. By David Bianic



“Don’t miss the wave” seems to be the mantra for 2021 when it comes to watersports. Generated, funnily enough, by a pandemic that brought the rest of the world to a standstill, the remarkable momentum enjoyed by boardsports (apart from snowboarding) in 2020 now requires some tricky work from the brands: to provide the quantities while the global crisis affects production. An example from JP Australia: “The main impact for the current range are delays from our suppliers. Basic materials became short already last year and the situation has become even more critical,” affirms Division Manager Sören Siebeck.

The other major impact for the market lies in transportation costs which are anarchic, multiplied by as much as five times, adds Guillaume Barbier, Product and Marketing Manager at Aquadesign/Lozen and this is down to a lack of available containers. Tripstix stands out from the crowd here because the German brand manufacture in Europe, an exception that allows them to “reduce the CO2 footprint immensely,” points out Mahoni Buchelt from Marketing. There is the same concept of proximity at Noah Boardsports: “If one product is selling better for you than another, we can address that from our same-day/next-day UK warehouse facility to ensure that you do not miss out on any sales,” assures Tom Lazarus,

“If one product is selling better for you than another, we can address that from our same-day/next-day UK warehouse facility to ensure that you do not miss out on any sales,”

Tom Lazarus, Noah Boardsports

Commercial Director at the 100% iSUP brand. The demand is really high and the supply sometimes really low, so much so that “purchasing is sometimes compulsive and buyers do not take the time to really look into it,” laments Guillaume from Aquadesign.

Several brands talk about the importance of pre-orders from distributors and retailers: “We are already taking orders for 2022,” explains Sander Blauw, Commercial Director at NSP, “It’s very normal in other industries, ie fashion to take orders 12-18 months ahead of delivery and this has happened for our industry now.” If this message wasn’t clear enough for you, Benoît Tréguilly from Take Outdoors (ex BIC) and SIC Maui can tell you again: “If you haven’t ordered already it is already too late.”

INFLATABLES NEWS 2021

Unsurprisingly, all-round inflatable models between 10 and 11' will again secure the sales for the coming year. A model like the Mahana 10' from Ari'i Nui for example ticks all boxes for a bestseller with its €350 price tag for a complete pack (pump, paddle, bag). Likewise, Jobe Sports have developed a new Aero Series range that's better value, also targeting this audience.



The brands are aware that these newcomers are sometimes less sensitive to the technical properties than their graphics, they know how to catch their customer's eye just like at JBAY.ZONE: "for the third consecutive year, on the design of our so-called 'artistic table' through a meticulous process of analysing international artistic trends and selecting professionals with a unique style and personal story", explains Massimo Vanzin from Digital Marketing. And so after the doodle art of Italian artist FRA! in 2020, JBAY.ZONE have called upon Eddie Colla, an American street artist living in France who has given a really urban touch to their SUPs and with great results. Along the same line at Yolo Boards, Floridian artist Andy Saczynski has been recruited on their successful Serenity model for a really "handpaint" effect. We should also mention the Limited Collection at Indiana who change their graphics every year. In 2021, Swiss rider and artist Steeve Fleury has signed four really nice décors, inspired by lots of different cultures. Another solution comes from Noah Boardsport, whose Aurora model is available in three colourways, a pretty rare option anywhere else.

"If you haven't ordered already it is already too late." Benoît Tréguilly, Tahe Outdoors

To reach out to their female following, Surfttech are renewing their collaboration with the jewellery/textile brand Pura Vida on two touring models- a rigid V-Tech and an inflatable- adorned with a very girly yet elegant déco in addition to accessories with the same colours (paddle, leash). Fanatic are also thinking about the female consumer, offering new models called "compacts", the Diamond Air Pocket and Diamond Air Touring Pocket, whose reduced weight makes it easier to transport and carry as well as to use. JP Australia are also thinking of the ladies with their Venus range and especially the AroundAir and CrusAir models, boards that are "perfect for cruising, touring, fitness and yoga," assures Franziska Müller from Marketing. Their 5" thickness (compared to a normal 6") allows for a lower position in the

"For Aqua Marina inflatable boards, definitely less printing, less glue and more environmentally friendly packaging." Chap, Aqua Marina

water which is more stable and also reduces weight. On this note, the well-named 'Feather' touring models from Indiana have attained record-breaking weight reduction: just 7kg for the 11'6" and 7.5kg for the 12'6"!

Reducing the weight is not just a mark of performance, reminds Chap, Head of Product at Aqua Marina, the slightest use of materials is also subject to environmental consideration: "For Aqua Marina inflatable boards, definitely less printing, less glue and more environmentally friendly packaging." These advances are down to soldering technology", he explains.

Likewise, the use of woven dropstitch called X-Stitch is further expanding in 2021, like at Aztron who have managed to reduce the weight of their Lunar 9'9", Mercury 10'10" and Titan 11'11" models by 20%, while still employing double chamber technology.

For more performance-focussed iSUPs, the crux of the battle lies in rigidity and Jobe are pleased with their addition of a double stringer on their 2021 Premium Series, "one stringer on the top of the board and one on the bottom of the board," explains B2B Manager William Doornekamp. The result is a board that is more rigid and reactive that also better preserves its rocker line. We shouldn't forget the new EZ-lock fin system that has a secure lock without the need for tools. Equally, Moai have opted for a carbon-PVC stringer "for better stability" clarifies Director Pleuni Holthausen. The big



new thing at Red Paddle Co for 2021 is the introduction of a tapered V-Hull like on rigid race models: "By cleverly tapering the cut of the drop stitch, the new hull breaks the surface tension of the water", explains Charlotte Green, Marketing Manager.

The success of wingfoiling is leaching into the iSUP world, especially with the arrival of the WingAir at JP Australia, a "true" wingboard model with a rail shape designed for foiling, to facilitate the take off. Available in 5'4" x 27.5" and 6'0" x 28.5": "Your knees will thank you for choosing an inflatable!", assures Franziska Müller. Your lower back as well because the whole wingfoil kit goes into a backpack. Another success



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FORM FOLLOWS FUNCTION

“The latest tech and innovations make this our lightest and stiffest SUP range to date!”

DOCKING RING

With the integrated docking ring you can easily connect your SUP to anything.

TIP & TAIL HANDLE

Integrated handles on the tip and tail, making it easier to get your SUP out of the water.

DOUBLE STRINGERS

A stringer on the top and bottom of the board for extra stiffness and strength, this also supports the rocker of the board making sure the SUP keeps its shape.

STORAGE CORD

Our storage cord is integrated in the design, creating more room to store your gear when you're out on the water.

CARRY HANDLE

A comfortable neoprene padded handle to easily carry your SUP around.

RAILTAPE

This railtape is placed over the seams of the board creating a more durable board which guarantees the best airtightness.

EVA DECK

A large EVA deckpad gives you a comfortable surface to stand on all day long, while providing you with plenty of grip.

EVA DECK GRIP

The back of our deckpad has a diamond pattern for added grip to initiate fast turning.

LEASH RING

Our leash ring is integrated with the deckpad, making it sturdy and creating a clean look.

EZ LOCK FIN

The most easy to use and secure fin ever! Easily click this fin in and secure it by pressing down the lock, it's as easy as can be.

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in the genre, the Falcon 7'6" from Aztron intends to be the only inflatable foilboard with double chamber, a technology that provides not just added safety but increased rigidity, "comparable to a hard foil board", states founder and CEO Tony Leung. Finally, innovations are sometimes hidden in significant details. This is the case for Indiana's iSUPs, equipped with a carry strap, two piece fin boxes for easier folding and a fibre reinforcement under the feet for a "rigid" feel as well as a Speed Tail, a little accessory under the tail for better flow.

"By cleverly tapering the cut of the dropstitch, the new hull breaks the surface tension of the water"

Charlotte Green, Red Paddle Co

RIGID SUP INNOVATIONS 2021

What about composite boards in 2021? Although they only make up a small portion of the market in terms of sales, they still have their place and legitimacy in the specialist boardshop scenario. Although it's difficult to compete with the inflatable alternatives for a first all-round board purchase, it's the second board (and third etc) where the shops can shine by offering rigid SUPs. We are obviously thinking here about touring models, the natural progression for a beginner wanting to cover more distance, faster, and with more style. Among the innovations in touring, there's the GT-S from JP Australia, an accomplished shape whose aim is "to enjoy the view on SUP tours while gliding at an average Race SUP speed". Speed is also on the agenda on Gladiator's Pro 12'6" model which suits heavy weights, able to take up to 150kg onboard. If contemplation is your buzz, we can also suggest the Fisher 12'6" model from YOLO, a board designed for fishing but not just that, it has various embedded fasteners

for attaching things like coolers for cold beers (in moderation).

Rigid models shouldn't be ignored for ranges destined for rentals and/or schools. It's precisely because these boards are designed for newbies that the brands have invested heavily in the durability aspect. An example of this comes from Ari'i Nui who have an ultra-durable sandwich epoxy model, the Processor and a soft epoxy alternative, the Throgger, covered in EVA with a slick soft in the underside "for the maximum in safety and durability", guarantees Benoît Brecq, Brand/Marketing Manager. Amongst the sure fire hits, we'd mention the HIT Cruiser from NSP, their best seller, with its "bullet skin" layer, which can take some hits.

Then there are the most elite categories; racing and surfing SUPs. If we are to believe Andy Wirtz, founder of Norden, "The demand for specialised boards such as small wave SUPs and narrow race boards has been going backwards a lot". The German brand are nonetheless counting on rigids, preferring to target a mid to top-level clientele and call upon tried and tested composite constructions to market them as safe bets.

But unless you are a specialised SUP shop with a loyal, targeted customer base, stocking this type of board is pretty risky these days for a retailer because they are destined for core SUPers who, with such specific requirements, won't hesitate to buy D2C. But for people who love premium rigid boards, it's hard not to drool over the Team Elite Carbon Skin and Team Elite Carbon constructions of Infinity's race SUP models the Blackfish (all water) and the Whiplash (flat water). Sure, the prices follow but this is because moulded carbon technology (produced at Kinetic) requires investment in a mould according to size, explains Leonardo Lazzeri and Andrea Di Sante, founders of JLID Distribution (Infinity, Jimmy Lewis, Love SUP...).



WWW.MOAIBOARDS.COM



AQUA MARINA

THE ALL-IN-ONE SUP

Beyond the inflatable/rigid divide, the trend towards polyvalent SUPs is reaffirmed with the rise of foiling models able to do it all, from classic paddling to simple foil, wingfoil, windfoil or surfboard. One of the first to venture into this genre were Fanatic, recalls Craig Gertenbach citing the Stubby Foil Edition, now succeeded by the Bee range in 2021. Slingshot are rerunning their Shred Sled, a three-in-one 7', 143 litre rigid board (wing, windsurf, SUP). We shouldn't forget about the historical brand Naish who are offering a wide range of hybrid boards under the Hover label providing a staggering array of combos between disciplines, with or without foil, for wing or wind...

"The demand for specialized boards such as small wave sups and narrow race boards has been going backwards a lot" Andy Wirtz, Norden

It's the same craze in inflatable SUPs, like for the Comet WJ2 which has successfully featured in the range at JBAY.ZONE for three years, reports Massimo Vanzin talking about this crossover board with "integrated sail support" for a windsup use on windy days. It's the same idea at Slingshot and their Crossbreed inflatables with a central sUP WINDER fin box to go upwind while wingsurfing.

One of the most invested brands in this niche is JP Australia with their X-Foil and Foil Slate designs. The first is more aimed at wingfoiling, downwind foiling and windsurf foiling (shorter and more compact), while the second is a veritable Swiss army knife: SUP, SUP surf, SUP foil, windsurf, windfoil,

wingsurf and wingfoil. Who can do better?

Versatility can also mean providing the means to add a kayak seat, an option which is nothing new but seems to be creeping back in. The director of Moai mentions an increasing demand for their 10'6" with seat fastenings, just like for Take with their SUP-YAK range, "a hybrid combination between SUP & Kayak use". Their Beach SUP-YAK 11'6" can take two passengers or kids, dogs or extra equipment.

OFF/ONLINE DISTRIBUTION

The forced closures of retailers during the various confinements have accelerated their shift towards e-commerce, even once their doors reopened... Chap from Aqua Marina tells us that "over 60% of our distributors/dealers mainly use e-commerce platform to sell or distribute." Dropshipping has now asserted itself as a solution that, although not ideal, avoids brands transitioning towards D2C en masse. To come to the aid of closed retailers, Red Paddle Co have set up a 'virtual shopping' service: "Customers can book in for a bespoke board recommendation, with a personalised video sent to them via email or arrange a video call with one of our highly knowledgeable customer experience team", explains Charlotte Green. The brands have no intention of breaking their ties with shops, as confirmed by the NSP team: "As we move to the 'new normal' there will still be people wanting to visit surf stores, connect with staff, see the complete range." Something to reassure you in these turbulent times. ☺

Visit our website to see in depth brand previews of this category.

BOARDSPORTSOURCE.COM

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Pre-order!
- 2 Stylish Allround iSUPs
- 3 iSUP foil/wingfoil
- 4 Multi-use models
- 5 Dropshipping

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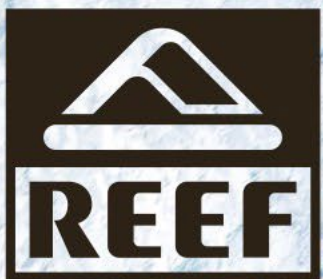


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RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

HANGING SHOES 2021

Traditionally, hanging shoes have catered to those living or visiting the coast, but with the ramifications of COVID travel restrictions being felt worldwide, how has this impacted an industry such as this? Ruth Cutts looks into the key trends, new materials and innovations coming from the Hanging Shoes market in 2021.



REEF

KEY TRENDS

For many consumers whose work life has been impacted by the pandemic, their daily commute to the office has been replaced with working from home, and with that a desire for casual and easy footwear has evolved. Havaianas has always been a brand whose products have been deemed as suitable both at the beach and in the city, and lately in the home too. "We have seen our fans using our models more and more at home and in their local, rather than on the beaches and pool areas we are normally associated with" explains Merel Werners, Marketing director EMEA.

Comfort has come to the forefront of consumers' minds, and for The Foam Life, whose SS21 collection marks their inaugural collection, features such as a lightweight construction, raised arch support and soft padded straps come as standard. Simplistic designs such as vegan leather straps on brushed recycled EVA footbeds offer a more premium look and feel, "perfect for the beach, bar or even workplace as dress codes relax and home working becomes more common" explains Co-Founder and Creative Director Karl Read.

"Our silhouettes and stories this season tap into our heritage, our environment, and that sunny optimism that surrounds us daily to bring you product that is comfortable and stylish; as appropriate on the sand as it is on the street", REEF's. Looking to cater to the "beach to brunch" mentality REEF are designing sandals that work for all usage occasions while still having comfort at the forefront of design. Inspired by the natural textures found at the beach, they've included wovens, rafias and recycled materials in their latest collection.

POST-PANDEMIC OPTIMISM

It would be foolish to ignore the impact that COVID has had on retail buy-in, distribution and revenue across the board sports industry but for many brands, the pandemic was a chance to recalibrate, refocus and streamline processes.

Kyle Parson, Founder of Indosole echoes this sentiment: "Yes, we have all been affected by COVID in a challenging way [but] in some ways, it has also provided

"Our silhouettes and stories this season tap into our heritage, our environment, and that sunny optimism that surrounds us daily" - REEF

clarity and an opportunity to focus in on the winners and trust our gut on which colours/models should be put into the world".

REEF took an offensive approach in their SS21 collection landing a balance between proven successful carryover product whilst simultaneously including a deliberate amount of new styles to deliver new price points, on trend styles, and deep diversity in product to excite consumers and retailers this year.

Cool Shoes managed to navigate new distribution agreements during the pandemic which provided unexpected growth, and for The Foam life, whose product was developed in the first lockdown of spring 2020, the initial reaction and sell-in to their initial set of production-ready samples was really positive reinforcing their confidence in launching the brand.

To combat the inability to showcase their latest product offering in person, Havaianas created a state-of-the-art Digital Showroom called Hatch which allowed their agents and sales managers to deliver a Havaianas experience totally digitally and still be able to reach and show their retailers the new collection. "It's been super successful, and we were able to reach our sell in targets in most countries," states Werners.

SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS

Despite the multi-functional usage of hanging shoes with today's consumer, the heart and soul for many brands is still rooted in the beach lifestyle. Ocean lovers, surfers, and environmentalists are often behind the R&D of these brands and with that comes a desire to make a product with the least impact possible.

As a certified B Corp, every pair of Indosole shoes is crafted from recycled tires which not only provides excellent grip on all surfaces and long-lasting durability, but also ensures that waste tires are not simply left to decompose (a process which takes thousands of years) or to be burned leading to toxic oils and fumes being released. All of their footbeds feature a blend of soft natural and recycled rubber materials, and each pair has an embedded arch support that will mould to the feet with repeated wear. "Over the years, we have consistently tried to make eco fashion more fun and attractive in an effort to bridge the gap between a natural look and an elevated fashion appeal" explains Parsons.

For REEF, sustainability has been part of their DNA since its inception. Returning to the use of natural materials and creating high quality products with a long life has always been at the forefront of their designs. All REEF products are 100% PVC free, and they only work with material suppliers who agree to not use restricted chemicals in the manufacturing of their materials. Other sustainable materials include recycled PET webbing derived from post-consumer plastic bottles, responsibly sourced leather and suede conserving over 1M gallons of water, and natural materials such as cotton, wood, cork, jute and paper. In Spring 21 REEF will be launching a green EVA solution with a renewable sugarcane-based midsole. The EVA is derived from renewable sugar cane instead of a petroleum oil formula and it is carbon neutral, reducing greenhouse gases.

For The Foam Life, the inclusion of hemp, as one of the most sustainable plants on the planet and a biodegradable fibre, is a highlight in their introductory collection. Hemp's production requires less than a third of the water needed for cotton and yields 220% more fibre. The plant grows without the need for harmful herbicides and pesticides and also replenishes soil quality. This material features heavily in their Mully model combined with a 'soft to step' brushed recyclable TPE foam footbed and a comfortable toe-post made from recycled plastic bottles.

BEYOND THE PRODUCT

Brands are extending their green practices beyond the products themselves, shifting their focus to the packaging as well to contribute further to a circular economy model. All of REEF's packaging is recyclable from 100% recycled paper hangers and shoeboxes to their paper hangtag made from 80% recycled and natural paper.

Cool Shoes have been focusing on the reduction of plastic usage for many years and for SS21 have moved all of their packaging to biodegradable polybags and recycled cardboard swing tags, and The Foam Life are using recycled card for their hangers and swing tags, which are attached with recycled paper string. Their product is shipped in cardboard cartons using adhesive paper tape rather



"In some ways, [COVID] has also provided clarity and an opportunity to focus in on the winners and trust our gut on which colours/models should be put into the world" - Kyle Parson, Founder Indosole

than traditional plastic packing tape from the factory to their warehouse, and individual styles are packed into biodegradable bags made from corn starch with a non-toxic, natural clay anti-moisture sachet.

MATERIALS & INNOVATIONS

Many brands are opting for non-animal-based product materials in their designs such as REEF's Women's Cushion Court and Men's Santa Ana models that have been crafted from PVC-free soft vegan leather. The Santa Ana also features a durable, grippy rubber cupsole inspired by bamboo alongside a super soft, rebounding EVA footbed.

When it comes to additional features, Flojos have included the use of a bottle opener integrated into the strap of some of their products and REEF continue the inclusion of their iconic bottle opener on the Fanning Slide. For Sinner, their focus has been on the soles of their latest collection. Their Balena model, new for 2021, features an innovative debased honeycomb structure in the sole for all-day support and relief when walking. Their Grip Flop model (previously known as the Beachslap) has a super grippy sole with tread inspired by the pattern of car tires. The result? Exception grip, optimal cushioning and long-lasting durability.

For SS21, Cool Shoes have a collaboration with PARA'KITO, a French company producing natural anti-mosquito essential oils, to create an anti-mosquito sandal on three styles which include a small pocket to hold the PARA'KITO cartridge that will last for 15 days with refills available at pharmacies and PARAKITO.com.

COLOUR & DESIGN

Many brands are taking their colour inspirations from their travels across the globe. Flojos' Elena model is a Mexican-inspired sandal that features a cute huarache strap, mock leather laced upper and a comfortable cushy EVA footbed. Cool Shoes' Ethnicoool range brings in patterns and colours inspired by the different surf trips their team have taken around the world, their Tropicool range showcases elements of the fauna and flora found at the dream tropical

"We have seen our fans using our models more and more at home and in their local, rather than on the beaches and pool areas we are normally associated with" - Merel Werners, Havaianas

locations they've frequented, whilst their Coolifornia range sticks closer to home exploring the Californian beach roots of the brand in the 80's.

Havaianas are introducing a new line of beach sandals called Sunny which come in bright neon colours targeted at a younger audience, they've extended their range of city sandals with the St Tropez range being expanded into now shapes and materials.

For REEF, bright, tropical colours featuring palm fronds, orchids, hibiscus flowers and other inspiration whilst, Indosole have applied some vintage tones to their flip flops and slides this coming season taking their existing colours of Shore Blue and Leaf Green and fading them out for a freshened look. Sinner's colour palette is inspired by nature with the inclusion of lots of natural colours such as sands, greens and browns featuring alongside pastel colours such as turquoise and coral.

The Foam Life are bringing an element of luxe to their collection with women's styles such as the 'Selene' which features a leopard print faux fur upper and their 'Zani' which features a sparkly upper in an all-black as well as a silver/sand colour-way. ©

Visit our website to see in depth brand previews of this category.

BOARDSOURCE.

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Sustainable practices extended to packaging
- 2 Post-pandemic optimism for most brands
- 3 Travel-inspired prints and colour ways
- 4 Use of natural materials to achieve a circular economy
- 5 Premium design for multi-occasion usage

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NEW PRODUCTS

01 / NIXON THE BASE TIDE PRO WATCH

Say goodbye to missing waves. The Base Tide Pro has pre-programmed tide info from 550 beaches across the globe, giving you local knowledge no matter where you paddle out. Water-resistant down to the pushers gives you full control, even mid-session. The soft touch silicone band is ventilated for extra comfort, and we've doubled-up our patented Locking Looper™ to keep it extra-secure on your wrist. Now made with recycled ocean plastics.

NIXON.COM

02 / NIXON THE HIGH TIDE WATCH

A high-resolution tide watch with a unique feature that allows you to set the home screen that's best for you and keep track of 550 pre-programmed locations with precise tide, sun & moon data, chronograph, and countdown timer. With a focus on both extreme durability and comfort, this the latest in premium tide. Now made with recycled ocean plastics.

NIXON.COM

03 / NIXON THE HEAT WATCH

The Heat is the result of one goal: to make a thin watch, made for timed sports, that is durable enough to withstand the demands of huge surf and any element thrown its way. Designed to be the fan favourite of gym rats to runners to surfers, the Heat was designed in collaboration with pro surfer John John Florence to time his competitive heats and his on-land training. When it's all about timing, comfort and style, the Heat is the clear winner.

NIXON.COM

04 / VANS THE TREK SLIP-ON SHOE

The Trek Slip-On takes the Classic Slip-On silhouette to a whole new level. The Trek Slip-On combines all the Vans DNA that you know and love with a durable, single piece injected construction, deconstructed checkerboard drainage holes for breathability, and an oversized reverse waffle sole for incredible traction in any situation. Designed to be lightweight and fully rinseable, the Trek Slip-On is easy to pack for your next adventure, so you can slip-on and on and on.

VANS.COM

05 / DAKINE JOHN JOHN FLORENCE KAIMANA SURF LEASH

Dakine was founded on designing a better surf leash. The Kaimana surf leash builds on Dakine's surf leash legacy with increased durability, comfort and performance. It uses 1/4-inch (6mm) Dura-Cord that's refined for reduced drag without compromising on strength. The low-profile ankle cuff conforms to the shape of your ankle for a zero-distraction fit.

DAKINE.EU

06 / DB JOURNEY'S THE BUNKER SURF BOARD BAG

A travel coffin developed by our award-winning designers who just happen to love surfing. Featuring integrated nose / tail packbags, honeycomb Rib Cage Technology™, foldable and compressible design and Db's signature Hook-Up System™. The Bunker holds 3 to 4 boards and is basically bomb proof. Patent Pending.

DBJOURNEY.COM

01



02



03



04



05



06



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RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

IMPACT VESTS 2021

The impact vest market seems to have gone through a real shake up this season, from standing still due to COVID-19 to being slingshot into vests flying off the racks and gaining more momentum in other watersports than 'just' wakeboarding. We break it all down in this retail buyer's guide. **By Dana Miskulnig.**



MARKET ROUND UP

Most brands seemed to have made contingency plans for the worst-case scenario due to COVID-19, from cancelling seasons or communicating with retailers and distributors how to weather the storm, but for most it turned out to be their best season yet. Jeff McKee, Brand Manager at Slingshot tells us, "It's gone completely nuts. Demand is through the roof as a result of folks turning to outdoor/individual sports to stay fit, focused and sane. It seems all the brands are in a race to get as much product in stock as possible." Cable parks might have struggled with getting people on boards due to lockdowns but those who were able to get out on boats and foils have been getting their hands on impact vests wherever they can, is the general consensus among brands and according to Aaron Grace, Marketing Director at Liquid Force, this momentum is here to stay, "Fast forward a year and LF has had one the best years to date and as of now, we don't see in slowing down in sight."

Usually our impact vest retail buyer's guide focuses on the wakeboard segment but there's a new player in town and that's the foiling segment. More brands are meeting the demands from foil enthusiasts to cater to their needs as Gary Siskar, Director of Marketing at Ride Engine explains, "In the past impact vests were viewed as a 'beginner' piece of equipment and now they are being used across all sports as a performance piece of equipment. We especially see growth and demand coming from the explosive participation in hydrofoil surfing and wing foiling." Following suit, Liquid Force have also expanded to include vests for foilers and Sooruz have developed the new FIFTY jacket, "A lightweight, high performance and versatile jacket, with a 50N buoyancy, on which you can tie a leash directly in the back of the vest," explains Yann Dalibot.

STYLE & TECH

Let's get into designs and new tech... when it comes to developing impact vests the memo has always been finding that sweet spot between functionality and design and brands have been working hard to kick it up a notch. O'Neill are boasting 20% less water absorption with their NytroLite Foam Technology that is used in all their impact vests and is also 3x lighter than conventional PVC foam. They also get bonus points in the style department with the majority of their vests being reversible so you can keep switching up the style. Opting for a quicker drying time, ION are using Dry Grid Neoprene lining to speed up the drying process of their Vector Select and AMP Vests, which also increases the stretch

"It's gone completely nuts. Demand is through the roof as a result of folks turning to outdoor/individual sports to stay fit, focused and sane. It seems all the brands are in a race to get as much product in stock as possible." Jeff McKee, Slingshot

and therefor fit too. Jet Pilot are pulling out all the stops in the tech department with their 360 stretch neoprene, Rip-Stop stretch and Glide Skin material but more on that in their brand preview. Like most brands, Follow caters to the cable park heroes with their original pro cuts but make sure to cater to the weekend warriors with their happy fit outline. Steve Anderson, Founder & Brand Manager breaks it down for us, "Its more relaxed in the mid-section for the beer loving, burger eater. It turns out this cut has been very popular in the market."

NEW RELEASES

Impact vests for foilers, new tech and more functionality; let's talk about some of the models we're looking forward to seeing out on the water. O'Brien have adapted one of their star pieces, the Men's Traditional, in the women's line which isn't just an impact vest but is also categorized as a life jacket and offers buoyancy to keep riders safe with a thin design and feel. "Its BioLite construction adds breathability for faster drying and makes it lighter and more environmentally conscious than traditional neoprene while still providing exceptional comfort," explains the team at O'Brien. Another vest we're stoked on is the Empax from Ride Engine, a vest dedicated to kites and windsurfers. The final piece we're looking forward to is another one in the women's line, the Fragment Vest from Jobe, which even has a 50N ISO certification that makes sure you will stay afloat at all times. ☺

Visit our website to see in depth brand previews of this category.

BOARDSPORTSOURCE.

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Foiling new impact vest trend
- 2 New drying tech material
- 3 More women's vests



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RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

SUNCREAM 2021

Action sports enthusiasts expect the very best from their equipment and apparel. A poor set up can be the difference between an all-day session in the ocean, on the slopes, or down the trails, and a disappointing early schlep back to the car. This demand for excellency extends further to miscellaneous items such as their sun protection too. When the consequences of a loss of focus can result in serious injury, enthusiasts will not accept sun protection that may hinder performance in any way. **By Ruth Cutts**



DESIGNED TO PERFORM IN THE ELEMENTS

Being able to withstand sweat, performing well in water, and providing protection from excessive exposure to wind and rain is integral for any action-sports specific sun cream to prove successful.

It needs to stay put to avoid stinging and irritating the wearer's eyes, it needs to be non-greasy to prevent a loss of grip, and it needs to provide long-lasting functionality to avoid the need for repeat applications throughout the day. As Maximilian Jagsch, CEO & Co-Founder of SWOX states, "those who partake in action sports set the gold standard for skin protection in every aspect."

For action sports enthusiasts the aforementioned high-performing and long-lasting protection is not enough in silo, it has to have it all. This includes the avoidance of ingredients that are damaging to the oceans or reefs, but also the functionality to travel well. Brands need to think about every aspect of the user's journey with their product.

Suntribe's reef safe Face & Sport formula for example is available in a travel-friendly aluminium tin which is ideal for warmer temperatures as it's leakproof and can handle extremely high temperatures. It's also available in a newly released cardboard Sun Stick which is suitable for use in colder temperatures as the stick makes the application smooth and fast even when it's cold.

Similarly, Island Tribe offer popular travel-friendly 10 ml versions of their products that can be easily stuffed in the boot of a car, a board bag or a day pack up the mountains, and Sun Bum offer a convenient & easy to carry premium SPF 30 Sunscreen Face Stick that is perfect for squirming kids, sandy hands, or a quick swipe of sunscreen across your face.

PROTECTING OUR PLAYGROUNDS

It would be almost criminal for those who enjoy spending their leisure time in the outdoors to be using a product that would have an adverse effect

"Those who partake in action sports set the gold standard for skin protection in every aspect."

Maximilian Jagsch, CEO & Co-Founder of SWOX

on the very playground that they revel in. Using environmentally-friendly ingredients is no longer an optional extra for sun protection brands who seek to be included in the arsenal of any sustainably aware action sports enthusiast.

"70% of the earth is covered by water, 70% of our body is water and we give back 1% for the planet" explains SeventyOne Percent Co-Founder and CMO Raphael Vannier whose latest innovation includes the use of 100% mineral filters to prevent harmful nanoparticles being released into our oceans without compromising on long-lasting protection.

RIDE Skincare use a non-nano mineral filter called titanium dioxide as their active sun filter. This mineral occurs naturally and once applied sits on top of the skin reflecting back the sun's UV rays. For premium water-resistance they use candelilla wax made from a shrub native to northern Mexico which provides a perfect barrier to prevent the product from being washed away over time.

Island Tribe's products are all free of perfume, parabens and do not contain oxybenzone, Sun Bum's products are reef-friendly, vegan, and cruelty free, and, since their inception, Himaya have always used mineral filters in their products. Suntribe's biggest innovation to date is the creation of a high-performance sport sunscreen formula which only contains three natural ingredients that are safe for the oceans and for our health.

For Greenbush's Founder Hervé Lacastaigneratte the paradox of travelling and surfing the world's oceans whilst simultaneously observing the deterioration of the very same environment he was thriving in lead him to set up Greenbush. "It was necessary to act, react, progress, and create an ecological project with three priorities: Environment, Health, Protection", he states.

Maintaining biodiversity is essential, and Greenbush sun care products are made up only of mineral fil-ters that do not degrade corals and provide stable and effective protection over time against UVB and UVA rays.

With the knowledge in dermatological formulation acquired during four generations of pharmacists and following their brand philosophy: "there are only two places you can't leave: your body and the planet", Nuura are proud to offer a high-quality product that guarantees the highest levels of sun protection even in the most extreme conditions, while being completely respectful towards the wearer's health and the planet. This is achieved through the use of 0% chemical filters, 0% nano ingredients, and fragrance-free & cruelty-free formulas that are natural index certified and are free from parabens and other chemical preservatives.

For surfers and other action sports athletes, who need high performance yet sustainable sun protection, SWOX offers two types of products: a vegan and organic mineral filter-only option and a highly protec-tive reef-safe sunscreen which combines UVA and UVB filters with zinc and titanium. The brand-new Mineral Stick and Mineral Lotion SPF 50 both contain mineral filters only, are reef-safe, organic and ve-gan.

Similarly, British brand SETT, have always used only mineral UV blockers zinc oxide and titanium diox-ide which provide protection against both UVA and UVB rays. Their sunscreens also use non nano parti-cles which don't sink into the deeper layers of the skin.

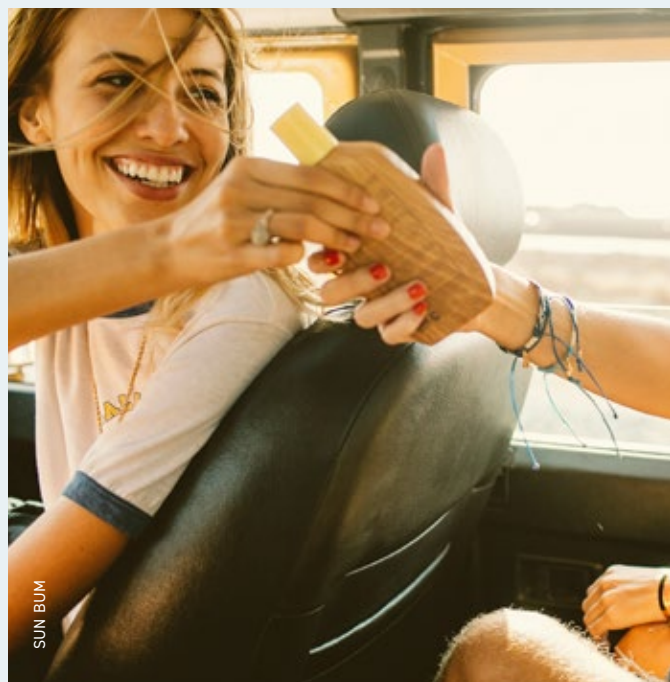
BEYOND THE PRODUCT

Striving for sustainable practices extends beyond the formulas themselves and includes all aspects of the supply chain from packaging to sourcing ingredients.

For Greenbush this means ensuring all of their formulas are of natural origin and all ingredients come from organic farming. Their range of products are Cosmos Organic certified by Eco-cert Greenlife ac-cording to the Cosmos standards.

The majority of Suntribe's packaging is completely plastic free, and all of their products are fully recy-clable. They've recently switched to climate-neutral sugar cane tubes for their mineral sunscreens and, right now, they're preparing the launch of a new product ("we can give you a hint, it's also zero waste and comes in a stick format" explains Co-Founder Karl Roos) together with their brand ambassadors, "it's fun to create a community around our company philosophy and around the sports that we love!" continues Roos.

Nuura's products come in cardboard, aluminium and 'I'm green plastic'



"Often times people only think about the protective properties of sunscreen, but we wanted ours to heal your skin as well." Dustin Smith, Sun Bum



which is made of renewable or-ganic sugarcane ethanol; meaning that their packaging is biodegradable, reusable and/or recycled and recyclable.

"At SWOX, our mission is to keep our eco-standard as high as the latest scientific research. We work hard to improve our products' sustainability, not only to keep these standards up, but to be part of the movement that pushes them even higher," says Jagsch. Beyond focusing on sustainable practices with regards to packaging and ingredients, they also source their products locally in Europe, in order to avoid long supply chains.

In 2021, SETT are launching a 5-litre bulk container of their SPF50 reef safe sunscreen to zero waste shops with reusable and refillable pouches so customers can reuse the pouch and limit the amount of plastic they use. Similarly, Himaya's natural line is now available in a refillable package system, which is CO2 neutral and Plastic Neutral by offsetting.

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

Many brands are keen to take a multi-faceted, holistic approach when it comes to their product ranges. Looking beyond only the protective properties of their sunscreen, brands are including ingredients that heal, soothe and care for skin pre, during, and post exposure to the sun. As Sun Bum's Dustin Smith states, "often times people only think about the protective properties of sunscreen, but we wanted ours to heal your skin as well."

Sun Bum use Vitamin E, an antioxidant that helps to neutralise free radicals, which are the main cause of premature skin ageing. Nuura similarly are using vitamin E, alongside vitamin F, to help regenerate the skin, alongside shea butter, carnauba wax and sunflower oil for an anti-inflammatory, hydrating and protective effect.

RIDE are using jojoba and coconut oil in their products to help re-hydrate skin and avoid chafing and chapping thanks to its anti-inflammatory properties. They're also using natural and organic ingredients in their post-sports moisturiser 'RIDE Recover' to help soothe and repair skin after exposure to the wind, rain, sun and waves

SETT's water-resistant sunscreen, is packed with moisturising argan, jojoba and Kalahari melon oils suitable for sensitive skin and ideal for children, whilst SeventyOne Percent are using organic sunflower vegetable oil which is rich in vitamin E and omega 6 to soften and nourish dry skin, organic jojoba vege-table oil to strengthen the skin's hydrolipid layer and regulate sebum flow for normal to oily skin, and bio vegetable glycerin to improves and soften the appearance of the skin. ☺

Visit our website to see in depth brand previews of this category.

BOARDSPORTSOURCE.

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Mineral filters are key for reef protection
- 2 Travel-friendly packaging is ideal
- 3 Natural ingredients used for healing qualities
- 4 UVA and UVB protection is necessary
- 5 Sustainable packaging solutions

NUURA



ONE BODY, ONE PLANET,
ONE WAY.

ORGANIC SUN PROTECTION



Ocean & Reef
friendly



Eco
packaging



Water
resistant



SPF 50
UVA / UVB / IR



Suitable
for children



Cruelty
free



Vegan



Hypoallergenic



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TOWN & COUNTRY

Iconic surf brand Town & Country was re-launched in Europe just as the pandemic hit in 2020 by industry vets Stephan Moretti and Wilco Prins. Both formerly high-ranking employees at Rip Curl the pair bring a wealth of experience to the brand which celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2021. We caught up with Stephan & Wilco to talk business.

How's the re-launch of the brand in Europe been?

We signed with T&C early 2020, just before the first lockdown. We spent the lockdown designing, to develop our products and to prepare our launch. Coming out of lockdown we launched our production with factories in Portugal for our tees and fleeces, made out of durable recycled African cotton. For our surfboards we came to an agreement with Johnny Cabianca and Mikel Agote to produce our Glenn Pang and Tommy Tanaka surfboards at Basque Country Surf. In June we received our production including our boardshorts and we had a great first season.

We opened our offices in Hossegor in July and opened our concept store, The Salts Only beneath our offices. If there is one thing that we learnt over time it is that being close to the customer is the number one rule for creating good product. We were overwhelmed by the reaction of the people who already knew the brand and who were happy to see it back in Europe, but also by how the brand is received by the current generation of 15 to 25 years old. The brand has so much brand equity, history and love. The first accounts we served have had great sell through on our clothing and the demand for boards and custom boards has



been ridiculously high.

2021, we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the brand with the opening of a Town & Country Surf Designs store in the centre of Hossegor. Furthermore, there are a great number of brand activations through some really exciting collabs in both surfing and skateboarding. In May & June, our collab with Vissla will hit the stores, after that we plan another three collabs between June and November in both surfing and skateboarding.

What's the brand's USP?

First of all, Town & Country Surf Designs has such a rich history in surfing with some of surfing's most notorious surfers.

Product-wise, we position the brand as a premium surf brand, which develops qualitative and durable both technical and comfortable surfwear products. World class shapes, technical boardshorts and durable organic cotton used for fleece and tees are our key focus. Cotton products that just get better and better over time and technical boardshorts that use premium fabrics with a great fit will be something that we will build our brand on. We build a base of permanent products that will be available all year long and we bring excitement with a number of limited edition stories we introduce during the year.

What are the most interesting regions in Europe for the brand?

Our main focus is on areas where there is surf, our natural playground and that is where our biggest potential is. Our online sales are strongest in France, Spain and in the UK. We are currently working with



a set number of independent accounts throughout Europe, which have great sell through results. We will do a collab at the end of this year that we believe will have a very big impact on our brand in all markets.

How do you see the surf market developing over the next three years?

It is going to be absolute mayhem. Currently, with the increase in the demand for wetsuits and surfboards, there are a lot of good but also a lot of bad products, shapers, surf schools and shops out there. We believe the current demand is too high to satisfy this demand with enough quality. Surfing developed itself too fast over the last 12 months. A lot of newcomers will not persist, but a lot will, especially with the development of wave pools. As surfers, we will be sharing the line up with more and more people. Surfing is an egocentric sport, art, activity or whatever you want to call it, so there will be a growing tension in populated surfing areas. With surfing becoming an Olympic sport, surfing will start to develop itself in other areas as well such as China. ☺



LANDYACHTZ

We sat down with Nate Schumacher from Landyachtz for an insight on the boom in skateboarding right now. Pre-orders up 100%, demand outweighing demand... oh, and the Olympics haven't even hit yet. Dive in as Nate talks strategy.

How has this winter been?

Winter has been busy! Our sales are generally seasonal and we have a few months to breath between Christmas and spring, but this year it's been completely nuts. Demand for Landyachtz gear has been strong all year and we're seeing more people getting into skateboarding, as spring approaches. It's been awesome to witness. Production is an ongoing challenge, but we are working through those challenges, which will hopefully lead to a busy winter.

What do you predict for summer 2021?

Growth! We are expecting to see a continuous increase in demand from pent up consumers. People are looking for safe and fun things to do outside, which makes skateboarding a perfect sport for them. There has been a small drought in availability, but once brands and shops get inventory, consumers will gobble it up. We are definitely going to see a ton of new skaters on the streets.

How have you improved your supply chain to match demand needs?

We have streamlined production on some of our simpler manufactured boards without sacrificing quality. By focusing on selected models with a strong sell-through and making a few tweaks to the processes, we have been able to shorten our lead time significantly. Some of our boards are far more complicated to produce, for example - the construction of Hollow Tech or some of our drop thru/drop down decks. They will still be in production

but are going to be harder to come by this season, as they just take longer and are more complicated to produce.

What have been the most popular items during the recent boom and why?

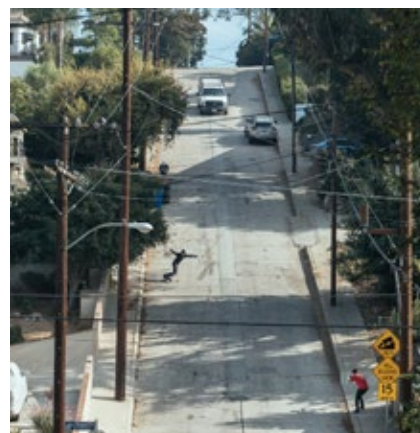
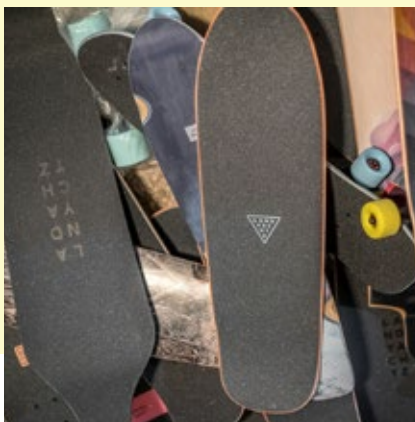
Surf Skates are a new category for us and we are seeing a lot of interest internationally. For example, there is a scene developing in South East Asia, which is really exciting to see. It is a new category being embraced by a demographic that may not have latched onto more traditional forms of skating. We are also seeing boards that are good commuters selling well. No surprises here as people are avoiding public transport, they are looking for alternative ways to run errands or get to school. Our Dinghys are really strong sellers and we are seeing boards like Dipper and Ripper, which are 36' longboards also doing well.

How has pricing been affected?

Manufacturing costs are increasing as well as global shipping rates. This is not only affecting the skate industry, so we are expecting pricing increases on pretty much everything else this year. Other industries have already begun increasing MSRPs to combat rising shipping and manufacturing costs. Ideally things will settle down over the next 18 months.

What have been your best performing markets globally? In terms of YoY sales and opening new doors?

We are seeing a Surf Skate trend develop in Thailand. There seems to be a growing scene of skaters, who are keen for all things related to Surf Skate. Influencers in the country have picked up Surf Skating and are promoting it heavily right now. It has been wild to witness, but we are getting a big amount of inquiries with people offering to distribute our brand. We've established a partner and will have a



distributor in Thailand going forward! Demand for skateboarding has also grown globally and we are seeing strong sales throughout Europe. Most of our Distributors have pre-booked over twice as much in 2021 as they did in 2020. This is a result of the increased consumer demand for all things outdoor and limitations in production/fulfilment. Our distributors are saying that demand is far higher than supply right now and they don't see demand slowing down in the next two years. We're anticipating this demand to continue well into 2023.

How are you expecting skate launches at the Olympics to impact the market?

Any time you see skateboarding enter the mainstream we see a rise in consumer attention. The Olympics will have a positive effect on skateboard sales globally. It will be interesting to see the effect on the cruiser and longboard categories as the Olympics focus is more on street skating. Although the Olympics will showcase high level street riding, we will see a trickle down to a broader audience with easy skateable boards. It takes years of practice to learn how to boardslide a 12-stair rail, but anyone can pick up a cruiser and have a blast exploring their neighbourhood. ☺



RD DISTRIBUTION

RD Distribution is a French Watersports distribution company founded in 1996. The company is run by a small team that hand picks and tests the brands they represent. They started with working on import and distribution of materials for shapers in France and the rest of Europe, and are now widening their portfolio to bring the best brands in watersports to the European market.

Can you tell us about the story of RD Distribution and the idea behind launching the business?

The idea behind the company is to distribute and offer the best brands we can find in the watersports. We are not looking into the most popular and marketed brands, but ones with a unique concept that fits into our R&D family. The brands we represent share our values and ideas of the product that the final customer should receive. For us, that is what makes a brand premium, in fact, luxury.

We are really lucky to have a team that are so involved with watersports, like surfing, kitesurfing, windsurfing, foiling, wing foiling, and SUP. Each one of them are so connected to their sports and out there on the water as much as possible. Having an experienced and sports orientated team, helps us find the best possible product out there. Every brand we represent has been tested first by our team members.

We have never really put a big emphasis on advertising and marketing and had a more of a word of mouth mentality. Our main focus has always been on giving the best service we can to our professional customers and their business. Although this has worked for us for years, with the increase of social media and the fast evolution regarding



communication in watersports, we decided to try a different route, to help customers in Europe find us easily. Big thanks to all you guys at Boardsport Source for this post and for their professionalism.

Please tell us a bit about the brands in your portfolio.

At the moment our portfolio consists of 6 brands:

Armstrong Foils: One of the best foil brands of the world. They produce foils, boards and wings at an awesome high-end level. The R&D is also mind-blowing, for their foils for example, they work with the designers of Team New Zealand and Luna Rossa (America's Cup).

Avanti Sails: If you are looking for a unique sails brand with unique R&D, Avanti Sails is the one. They have been developing membrane sails in windsurfing for over 9 years. The performance of their shape and materials is unique and accessible to all!

Sunova: A brand with a big history, they have been making handcrafted boards since 1976 in their own factory. A unique knowledge in terms of Balsa and Paulownia constructions to create magnificent boards for SUP, wing foiling, surfing, windsurfing, kitesurfing.

Surf Organic: We are also very conscious of the environmental impact of our sports on the Planet. So it was a no brainer for us to help this brand promote and import their eco designed products for wax and surfing accessories.

Betel Nut: This is a one-of-a-kind brand, handcrafted wax by a passionate man. Our team tried out the product, loved it, and the rest is history.

Blackfish: Blackfish is one of the best SUP



paddle brands on the market. The shapes are really efficient, the construction is light, and the best aspect is that you don't need to be a professional to appreciate all their range!

Exciting news, you have recently teamed up with Armstrong Foils, tell us more about that?

Yes, we are so excited to work with a brand like this and they fit right in with what we stand for. The Armstrong Team is really unique in terms of efficiency, responsiveness, and high quality of development. We already contacted them 3-4 years ago but the timing for the European market wasn't right. After trying their foils, boards and wings, everyone on our team was stunned... It was a big YES to work with them.

How do you see the market for foils developing in the European market?

It's going to be crazy. Right now, especially in France, the demand is growing on a monthly basis. We can already see the same demand in the rest of the European countries like Germany and Holland. Kitesurfing first democratized the foils. Then, windsurfing and SUP adopted it, but now, with wing foiling, it overtakes the other 3, and is going to boost the foil's market. ☺



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It is March 23rd as we write this. The minister-presidents negotiated well into the night with the Chancellor to come up with a package of measures for Easter in order to contain the new surge in the number of infections. Under the new framework regulation of the federal government, a hard lockdown will be in place over the Easter holidays. The easing of some of the restrictions, which had been agreed upon during the last conference with the minister-presidents at the beginning of

March, is to be revoked for this period, and the country is to be shut down once again. To date, a matrix for the re-opening of the various sectors has been in place since 8 March as a guideline. Depending on the incidence of Covid-19 cases and on the size of the retail area, shops are allowed to accept a limited number of customers. If the incidence is 50 or more, an appointment is mandatory; from an incidence of 100 new infections per 100,000 inhabitants in a week, an emergency brake is pulled and the opening schedule can then be reversed.

Before the variant B.1.1.7 started to dominate the infection scenario, the plan actually looked different. Vaccines were developed in record time and a nationwide network of vaccination centres was established. A rapid antigen test strategy was implemented, rapid tests to be used by the general public were made available for sale, and vouchers for FFP2 masks were sent to people in need of extra precautionary measures. Companies hit hard by the pandemic were promised financial contributions via the Bridging Aid II and III as well as via the November and December aid. In addition, write-offs under the commercial law were extended to seasonal goods. Positive reports from the business community accompanied this package of measures and brought the first spring feelings after a hard Covid winter. On 16 March, the Federal Statistical Office in Wiesbaden spoke of "the solid start of production-related sectors into the new year".

However, this sense of optimism did not last long. Vaccine supply shortages, a temporary suspension of vaccinations with Astra-Zeneca, a lack of rapid tests and the spread of viral mutations are forcing the federal State to introduce one package of measures after the other. The brick-and-mortar retail sector is suffering a particularly hard blow. While online sales continue to boom due to the lockdown, in February 2021 sales of textiles, clothing, shoes and leather goods in retail shops plummeted by 76.2% compared to the same month last year (source: Destatis). The Easter lockdown and rising incidence values are getting in the way of a real opening perspective. The sense of unity in the crisis, which politicians have frequently called for, contrasts with a federalism where individual states are going their own way, thus leading to a decline in understanding and acceptance among the population.

An example of this is the situation of the German ski resorts. After the alpine winter sports destinations in the country had already given up on the season, at the beginning of March Winterberg (North Rhine-Westphalia) and Willingen (Hesse) were actually given the go-ahead for limited skiing activities. Up to 2500 day tickets were allowed to be sold daily in the Winterberg ski area through an online booking system. Max Bechen, who runs Stylefish in Winterberg, was completely surprised by the announcement: "Since other ski resorts had already declared the season as concluded, I couldn't imagine that anything would still happen here!" Although the ski area has been practically fully booked since then, this has hardly made an impact on the shop and the snowboard school. "For the few days left in the season, no customers are stocking up on new products. And our snowboard school is more or less a non-existent advertising factor due to the contact restrictions." Since Max only took over the shop just before this season, his company cannot report any losses compared to the previous year, and thus, according to him, currently remains ineligible for state subsidies. "Apart from the short-time working

allowance, I get exactly 0€ worth of Covid subsidies, because I cannot prove a drop in sales!" The ski area will now possibly have to close again for the Easter lockdown. "For the snowmaking, machine hours and all the staff, the Easter turnover had certainly been factored in! The ski area will now have to cover a lot of the costs," explains Max. Since only a small amount of goods could be sold this winter, the pre-orders placed with suppliers had to be reduced accordingly: "I had to cut the winter pre-order by about 80% compared to last year!"

A similar view is expressed by Simon Sander of S'Brett in Mannheim: "We have had to cut our orders from our winter suppliers for the coming season by 70-80% compared to the previous year. Overall, we are currently talking about a drop in sales of over 90% for snowboard-specific winter products. Only skateboard hardware has performed well over the winter and has saved our ass a little bit!" Due to the high incidence of cases in the area, Simon was only able to open his shop for one week in March for customers who had booked an appointment. Since then, the shop has been operating on a shoestring via Click & Collect. "We use social media, WhatsApp, landline and emails to provide our customers with advice. What is sold through this system does not even suffice to cover the rent." Through his tax advisor, Simon has been able to apply for Bridging Aid III. "The first payment is supposed to come in soon, but I'm not sure how much I'll have to pay back in the summer." For the aid, upcoming monthly sales have to be estimated, which is not really feasible due to the constantly changing rules for retailers.

Gerd Weisner of GTA Distribution in Frankfurt, on the other hand, sees his business model in a positive light at the moment: "Water sports and roller sports have gone through the roof in the pandemic. Skateboarding in particular, as an individual sport that you can do right on your doorstep. SUP has also performed very well in the winter. People have equipped themselves with wetsuits and want to get out and move around. But also surfing has done well. I'm sure that due to the travel restrictions a lot of new equipment is sitting unused in living rooms at the moment and merely being stroked!" Overall, Gerd reports about 100% increase in surf and skate, which could have been even greater if enough product could have been delivered. "Whether in the USA, Europe or Australia, surf and skate are currently in high demand everywhere! At the same time, production lead times and shipping times have increased considerably, so there are significant delays in delivery."

The same difficulty is experienced by Benjamin Süß of Wasserski Langenfeld: "Delays are happening everywhere at the moment! And when suppliers can deliver, there are often missing items." The facilities of Wasserski Langenfeld have already kicked off the new season. "Wakeboarding and our surf wave are up and running now. As for retail, we are only able to operate with restrictions. Our restaurant, however, remains closed for the time being. With regard to the Easter lockdown and for the following period, we are constantly looking out for new rules, virtually every hour," Benjamin Süß concludes. This is not what planning security looks like.

The coronavirus has been affecting the boardsports industry for over a year now. The segment that has clearly suffered the most is snowboarding. Despite the late opening of ski resorts or individual lifts in the lower mountain ranges, we can speak of an almost complete cancellation of the season here. Due to the travel restrictions, only a few aficionados have crossed the borders to use the lifts in operation. And despite very good snow conditions, the splitboarding segment is still too small to be able to support an entire industry. Watersports and roller sports, on the other hand, are amongst the clear winners. Sales in these sectors were really boosted by the Covid-related restrictions. Retailers who are well positioned in these areas or who can also offer their products online during the lockdown have the best chances of surviving future restrictions and lockdowns.

ERIC BRUWELEIT

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Late March 2021 and The Fat Lady sung her song loud and clear - the winter is over. In truth it never started for us in the UK and the business has been decimated. The UK retailers and distributors bore the brunt of it and the chicken is now coming home to roost with the brands - who can only dream for pre-orders for the coming season. There will be massive declines.

Once again, I would reiterate that retailers, distributors and brands have all (mostly) worked together - the "all in it together" understanding was clear for just about everyone. Well.. mostly.. there is one snowboard brand who seemed to forget this and they went ahead and threatened retailers left, right and centre for payment - I wonder how their order book is looking? Just about everyone else seemed to understand the situation.

Current lockdown will ease on March 29 (history by the time you read this) with individual outdoor sports back on the table. On April 12 we can return to the pub (outside only) with the next significant change being mid-May. Then the Covid road map takes us to the longest day of the year (21/06) when it should (should?) all be 'back to normal' - whatever that means. I don't know about longest day of the year but this has certainly been a long year. And pretty tough.

In my last missive I mentioned The Board Basement going to the wall and mused that it would be a "big ask" for someone to rescue the retailer. Well someone did. Honestly I was surprised but also extremely pleased - it's great to see someone having the confidence to invest in the winter sports market at this time. That someone is Jonathan Capener from 'Outdoor and Country' - new owners of 'The Board Basement'. Outdoor and Country have a great online presence and 9 physical stores with their head office in Staffordshire and the stores range from Knutsford in Cheshire to Street in Somerset. The current offering is very much active country fashion and not boardsports.

Of course my first question was why and what's in store for The Board Basement? "We have been looking for a winter sports and action sports opportunity for some time to complement our organic growth. This was a very timely opportunity. Our intention is to begin with the core of all things boarding - SUP, skate, wake and snow - but we will also look to evolve the product and brand offering over time together with an extended range of lifestyle apparel."

"Initially The Board Basement will be online only but in time we will be considering the instore potential for a shop-in-shop concept in the larger stores". Unfortunately the purchase came too late for the Board Basement staff. "Sadly the purchase was made from the liquidators after the staff had been made redundant". Jonathan is upbeat about the future for The Board Basement. "We are very much looking forward to the opportunity to grow the wider business into the action sports market and we look forward to meeting new faces and creating new opportunities." Entering a new market at a time when, to be frank, Covid has put the winter sports market on its backside in the UK could be regarded by some as a brave move.

But who knows? If you look at some of the government data

this may be the perfect time to enter the market. Whilst Covid is apparently going to cost the equivalent of £14k per household in the UK growth for 2022 is forecast to be the fastest since 1948 at 7.3%. That's the highest for 74 years! The Office for Budget Responsibility (an independent forecasting body) use terms like "surge ahead" when referring to the future. I have little doubt that, if we are allowed to travel and feel safe to travel, then the winter sports market will bounce back with a vengeance. The trouble is we just don't know and this is clearly reflected in the winter sports retailer pre-order books which are low. This is the polar opposite to water sports where stocks are going to be in short supply, pre-orders are high and will have to be even higher for the next season if we are to get it right.

I picked up the 'Fat Lady Song' with Matt from Absolute Snow: "We're a winter sports retailer - there's a clue in the name! I cannot find the words to describe how our winter has been. We've sold a bit but that's it. It's really not a pretty scene. Our buy-in for this winter is based on a very conservative forecast and our aim is to get through it, clear the shelves and be ready for the follow-on season. We're not anticipating a rapid return to the mountains. We don't believe the 'every day' enthusiast will have the confidence to travel. So our aim is to consolidate, reduce the extraordinarily high stock levels and get ourselves in a good place for 22/23 season."

What about the large carryover stocks? "Most of it is still going to be new to the consumers so we're going to hold our price wherever we can. Much will depend on our competitors of course."

And what of the summer season? "We will achieve great growth in that area but it's from a relatively small base so it's pretty easy to grow. Nevertheless, outdoor is getting more and more important to us. Outdoor is really 'on trend' and the covid-bounce will have a really positive impact on this sector."

So, Matt thinks it will not be until winter 22/23 before things get back to normal. I hope he is wrong.

Checking in with Henry from Shore Watersports, one of the longest established water sports stores in the UK, he was upbeat and as positive as anyone can be. "This is the heyday of all heydays. The problem is not selling the stock it's getting it so that we can sell it and it's managing customer expectations."

Sounds good to me. "It is good but also very frustrating - for example one of our key wetsuit suppliers has not managed to get any wetsuits to us this season. This has resulted in old supplier relationships being re-opened up - to be honest a good supplier is one that can offer us supply. That's where it sits"

And all this in March? "Yeah - it's mad. We're building and extension and we're staffing up to help us cope with the demand. It really is going to be mad!" Any concerns? "Yes - long term inflation - we can already see pricing increasing 10% and even 20% - we have to be careful not to be price our sports too high."

In summary - winter crap, summer good, vaccination programme good, optimism high - let's just get covid behind us. The singing Fat Lady can take the roosting chicken for Sunday Lunch and choke on it!

GORDON WAY

FRANCE

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On March 16 2020, President of the Republic Emmanuel Macron took to the nation's TV screens to announce a general lockdown (confinement) on the entire country. The whole of France took stock of the seriousness of the COVID-19 health crisis. A year on and 3 confinements later, COVID-19 is very much still circulating in France, as it is across the whole world. The COVID-19 epidemic has weighed heavily on French morale, disrupting day-to-day living in 2020 - a year punctuated by confinements and curfews. At the start of 2021 the situation was still concerning, despite hopes that the

vaccines would provide a way out of the crisis. This was exactly what the government were counting on to try and tackle the epidemic. Despite delays at the outset, the national vaccination campaign now seems to be ramping up, the goal being to vaccinate the majority of the population by the summer and the government has stated its intention to further expand its vaccination campaign against coronavirus. The vaccines were first available to people aged over 70 before a more widespread approach from mid-April was scheduled. Despite all the social distancing measures and the rolling out of the vaccination campaign, the spread of the virus is accelerating in France this spring 2021. Since January, the curfew at 18:00 has been in force throughout the whole country to try and prevent a 3rd wave but because of new variants circulating, the situation has unfortunately worsened, forcing the government to put in place new confinement measures for the 3rd time but this time on a regionalised basis. At the time of writing, it's the North, East and extreme South-East and the whole Paris area that are subject to these new measures. The confinement mark 3 is more relaxed when it comes to leaving your home and it is now localised and regionalised in order to limit people's movement to 10km around the home with a ban on leaving your own department if it falls under these measures. All "non-essential shops" have again had to close their doors in these departments, accompanied by governmental aid in place (partial unemployment and compensation). Schools, however, remain open except for high schools, which must now cut student attendance numbers in half. The government are selling this measure as an educational concern but above all it allows parents to continue working, thereby avoiding millions of people going into partial unemployment to look after their kids.

It's still too early to assess the effectiveness of these new measures but the 3rd wave seems to be breaking over the country this spring and the curves and indicators are relentlessly rising. The coming weeks will be critical in the battle against the virus in France and the head of state has already said he'll be announcing new measures to be put in place in the coming days and weeks, with some scientists and epidemiologists talking about an inevitable total confinement in France...How will the boardsports market cope with this turmoil?

The winter season finished up in mid-March. A peculiar season; without ski lifts and in the midst of a sanitary crisis there was a lot of snow on all of France's mountain ranges. Mountain professionals have seen mixed results. The season could have been excellent this year: the snow was good in contrast to last year. But in these circumstances, the government chose to forbid ski lifts to open. Holidaymakers, deprived of alpine skiing took to other activities, which was not enough to save the season. Christophe in the shop Algoud Sport at the Col du Rousset: "We are looking at just 30% of the turnover we could have had in normal times", he laments. Such income only provided money to pay the charges and employees. To save the season, Algoud Sport relied on nordic activities rather than alpine skiing: "We adapted, there were big successes in cross country skiing, nordic ski touring especially, and snowshoeing, there were some days where we had no more cross-country skis or snowshoes left", says Christophe.

It was the same story at Neway in Nantes, a multisport shop opened in 1995 that has a wonderful winter sports section. Rémi Harnois confides that: "The winter was difficult for this section with very little in the way of equipment or technical clothing sales this year." He adds: "It's an important section for the shop in this period and the circumstances led to a large drop in turnover. We now find ourselves with quite a lot of stock."

But one person's misery can be another person's delight. The whole coastline seems to have benefited from the ski lifts being closed this year. From Waimea in Anglet, the oldest surf shop in Europe (1976), Xabi Anton tells us that: "We've had a really good winter". He explains: "People preferred to come to the coast, no trips abroad, remote working, people came to live on the coast and we had really high visitation numbers." He adds: "As soon as you shut people off from things, they tend to consume, taking solace in things that are allowed to do like surfing!"

The same effect was noticeable at The Farm in Hossegor where Olivier Cuissot and his associate Alain Riou confide that: "We had our springtime in the winter, the population swelled, notably with people coming to lock themselves down in Landes, remote workers or seasonnaires from ski resorts who weren't all able to work." He adds: "Although the Easter holidays are known for knockdown sidewalk sales in Hossegor, this will not be the case this year. However, we are up by 75-100% turnover per month this winter." He explains: "The portion of leisure/culture/restaurant budget has been invested into purchases or updating equipment."

The same was felt further north Nova Funa in La Tranche sur mer where Pascal Boutin says: "The COVID effect was rather positive in visitations as well as sales, the open-air side of things was a safe haven during this time." At Neway in Nantes, Rémi adds: "We saw higher demand in equipment compared to previous years, especially Surfing and SUP but also skate and surf skates." However, he does state that: "We missed out on quite a lot of sales because of a lack of stock at quite a few suppliers, particularly in neoprene." At ATS in Plouharnel in Brittany, shop manager Xavier Auffray also states that "the coast has abnormally benefitted all winter from an influx of holidaymakers who normally head to ski resorts. So there has been a livelier winter period than normal on the coast," before adding: "The neoprene section was literally emptied."

Everyone agrees that the challenge of the 2021 season to come will be stock and supply. Xavier from ATS explains: "the problems with supplies are many, whether it's at a production level to meet the strong demand or at a logistical one with shortages of containers and delivery times getting longer!" At Nova Fun and most shops we are already seeing delivery delays, especially technical equipment Pascal tells us. Rémi from Neway adds: "With more foreseeable consumer demand compared to previous years, expectations on their part are even higher!" It's the same for Waimea, Xabi telling us that: "Deliveries are having trouble arriving, delay after delay, we are lacking merchandise because the demand was strong this winter, we are running very last minute." At The Farm, Olivier confirms: "Overall we have tried to anticipate as best we can but the situation seems to be straining more and more. The lack of blanks and boards will quickly have an effect on June's restocks: the summer season will be tricky in terms of stock!"

If we are to assess the situation, it was mostly technical equipment that saw strong demand this summer: surfboards, neoprene, skateboards, symbols of the open-air and freedom seem to have made the most out of this epidemic. The winter has therefore been pretty positive for the coastal and flatland shops and the challenge for the season ahead seems to be stock and supply.

While the threat of another national confinement looms over the country, right this instant the season is being launched with new challenges to overcome....

BENOIT BRECCQ

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2021 started and not much changed. Economy-wise Italy is still struggling and especially brick and mortar retail together with hotels, restaurants and bars are the big losers of the continuous lockdowns. Italy has its coloured lockdown model. White means everything is open, yellow means only a few restrictions, orange means gastronomy is closed but retail stores are open but people are not allowed to leave their cities and red

means pretty much everything is closed. During January it was still ok, but in February most regions turned orange and the end of March now sees a lot of regions in Red as the infection rate increased again. The vaccine is still the light at the end of the tunnel but the number of doses arriving to Italy is not very promising and it should take until at least mid-summer before we reach a good percentage of vaccinated people. This is leading the Italian population to be disenfranchised with many simply tired and fed up with this whole situation, which seems to reach no conclusion.

It's especially bad for retail as big inventory levels are hurting cash flow and not being able to plan makes life really hard for store owners when pre-ordering for FW21. Everyone has now started to market their goods on social media and tries to do some turnover with home delivery or click and collect, which is the same case for gastronomy so at least a part of the lost turnover can be recovered.

FW21 has been a disaster for pre-orders on outerwear and snow hardgoods and saw a heavy decline as shop inventory levels is still very high. Snow & ski touring saw some increases in pre-orders while it was the only means to ski or snowboard this winter as no single resort could open this past season in Italy.

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It's been a year since our lives and habits changed, morale hit an all-time low, the economy is flagging and our business, like many others, is suffering. With 2021/22 pre-orders and the winter season reaching a conclusion, it's time to take stock of the situation.

What we noticed in the middle of the winter season was confirmed by the rest of the season. As you may know, Switzerland was (as it often is) an island in the middle of Europe, able to keep her ski lifts open all

season. And yes, in Switzerland we were riding from November to April, often in good conditions. This good fortune, in contrast to neighbouring countries, allowed winter boardsports businesses to come through OK but unfortunately this didn't apply to everyone, the hotel industry suffered, some shops too, but they generally managed to hang on to the furniture.

Rental shops outside of resorts struggled, mostly because of the uncertainty around resort openings/closures. The renowned shops in big resorts that survive mostly on tourism also suffered because of travel restrictions, while servicing workshops and touring specialists were in full flow. The mad scramble for touring was relentless, splitboarding equipment ran out in January while demand was still very much there. Obviously some people missed out so hopefully they postponed their purchases until next season. Approaching the end of the pre-ordering period, we can see that the shops are trusting in the expansion of snowboard touring because splitboard orders have increased significantly for next year. Let's hope they are right and this translates into good sales this autumn. On the flip side we can already see its limitations, it appears that splitboard binding suppliers as well as skin manufacturers

Luckily skateboarding still stays very, very strong and distributors and stores see record sales during the lockdown months. US brands such as Deluxe SF or Baker remain high and so are many deck companies from Europe and demand for trucks and wheels from US companies are the product categories seeing the most shortages as also global demand seems very high. Completes have been very high in demand for a year now from different price ranges, so this should also lead to a lot of new hardgood sales in the future. As far as clothing goes, the revival of the baggy pant is here and it's good so see as it reminds me of the good old days in the late 90s. Overall skateboarding styles gone a little rougher and is now workwear and outdoor inspired.

Many boardsport stores have updated their online presence and the digital evolution saw a real boost, which is notable in every business right now and the so called "lazy Italians" are not so lazy anymore when it comes to e-commerce. This is good on one side but also sad on the other side as the physical stores especially for our boardsport segment are crucial in keeping the scene alive and healthy. No skateparks will be built without the help of a store and no local contests will be held without the push of a good local brick and mortar store, which is still the meeting point for every skate crew in all the small cities throughout Italy.

Surf stores have a positive outlook for this upcoming 2021 summer as if things get better starting from May which we all hope, the season should even improve of the successful 2020 season as everyone is ready to get to the beach and have fun on and around the water.

The start of 2021 is a mix of fear and hope as everyone can't wait to leave Covid19 behind and start heading towards a better tomorrow...

FRANZ JOSEF HOLLER

will struggle to meet the demand. Spark R&D for example have already let it be known that they will only be able to deliver a part of what is desired and that everyone is likely to see their orders somewhat reduced, powerless to do anything about it. The boards should be produced so let's just cross our fingers that the rest follows.

According to Matt Rouiller from Lévitation in Martigny, the winter is still very much present at the end of March. He's still selling, and people want to make the most of it until the end. Obviously, with the spring coming, skateboarding will take over the reins, but snowboarding is still on a nice little run so Matt will keep his winter stuff in the shop for a few more days. So skateboarding is picking back up as confirmed by Chrigu from 3Sixty in Stans; sales of his cruisers and completes are going well. When you think about this turn of events and the uncertainty around travelling, it's highly likely that we are witnessing a craze towards individual outdoor sports, both in towns and out in nature, and that could really work in skateboarding's favour.

Finally, the surf market is difficult to call, it's not a huge base to begin with and the travel restrictions clearly don't help. Swiss surfers have always had to travel to pursue their passion and the prospect of closed borders is putting the brakes on surf trip plans as well as new equipment purchases. However, since the Alaïa Bay project recently came to fruition in Sion, the game has changed a bit. The first Wavegarden (artificial wave pool) in continental Europe is almost ready to greet its surfers. Now in the final phase of tests, the first customers will be getting barrelled in May with the Alps providing an unusual backdrop. Clearly this is good news for Swiss surfers, as well as for shops selling equipment and accessories. Surf's up in Switzerland! Thank you Adam and his team for turning this dream into a reality.

FABIEN GRISEL

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What a winter season! The pandemic has had us in a firm grip for more than a year now. Not much has changed, the situation remains more than uncertain and it's hard to make plans. The Austrian federal states in the east – Vienna, Burgenland and Lower Austria – entered another strict lockdown set to last for various weeks from Easter. While in the westernmost federal state, Vorarlberg, the situation has stabilised

around lower figures and some gradual steps have been taken in the direction of reopening. After a little more than a year, it's fair to say that there is a sense of pandemic fatigue.

Unemployment figures are still high. The driving force of the economy, namely private consumption, continues to be very sluggish. People tend to postpone expenses. Although a recovery is expected for the summer season, to what extent this will happen remains highly uncertain. Especially in Austria, this is of course dependent on the travel restrictions and how the summer season can be taken advantage of in terms of tourism. Losses of over 90% are expected with regard to the winter season as a whole, and the full-year outlook for 2021 remains pessimistic.

Here we can draw a parallel between the winter sports sector and the boardsports equipment retail. We have asked some retailers for their assessments. While retailers in heavily touristic areas are confronted with a near or even total loss of revenue, retailers in metropolitan areas are able to report thoroughly decent results thanks to their established customer base. Their results, however, remain far from pre-crisis levels and government subsidies are a major factor in sustaining them. Susn Fuerhauser of Brettlpraxis in Linz speaks of a winter that was "almost the

PORTUGAL

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Portugal has been on lockdown for two months since mid-January until 15th March. It was one of the worst winters in the country's public health history with the number of Covid infected out of control, overcrowded hospitals and ambulances on the waiting line outside some of the main hospitals. Portugal was leading the ranking of the worst countries in the world in number of deaths and infections per million inhabitants. Letting families get together in Christmas was government's deadly mistake that claimed many lives and along with the new British variant

of the virus forced the country to close the economy again. After the tsunami and to avoid making the same mistake again, the government opted for a slow reopening similar to what happened in May 2020 divided into four stages starting March 15. April 5 is an important date for surf/skate shops because they will reopen their doors if everything goes according to plan. Rules are the same as before with a limited number of customers inside, social distancing of 2m, customers and staff wearing masks and alcohol-gel for hand hygiene.

Due to this new shock on the economy the government launched a 7-billion-euro aid package for companies, 16% of which is non-refundable, that is, 1160 million euro. Companies that benefit from this financial support won't be able to fire employees in the next three months.

After having good sales in Christmas last year, the new lockdown forced retailers to close in mid-January. They've put back into practice the marketing strategies used last year to encourage online commerce through websites, social media, free shipping and delivery door-to-door.

Surfers Lab is one of the most iconic surf shops in Sagres in the Algarve since 2013 that has expanded their business to Peniche

same as always". The locals were motivated and the winter was good. "The ski and snowboard service was very popular, and so users of the service usually also bought something over the counter," she tells us. Due to the great uncertainty, however, she still slowed down on pre-ordering – categories like clothing and hardware in particular are difficult to plan for. As far as the summer is concerned, she expects a similarly successful season as last year. She continues to be optimistic with regard to the water sports segment with surf and wake products and has accordingly somewhat upgraded her stock in that area. Gernot Brandstätter of Surf Service Graz, who is another example of a shop operating in an urban area with many regular customers, reports strong sales of splitboards, freeride boards, race boards, boards for women and the respective accessories. However, a big gap in sales has arisen as far as basic goods for kids are concerned, and here he mentions the cancelled skiing and snowboarding courses for children. "That certainly has an impact," he tells us. But he also mentions that in his case, receiving government support has been quick and hassle-free. Similarly, Thomas Thurnher of the Dresscode Shop in Rohrbach points out that the state subsidies worked quickly and well, for instance in the form of compensation for lost revenue. For his shop, however, this winter has hardly kicked off at all. Major differences can be observed between the individual categories. While snowwear and hardware tended to remain unsold, streetwear and skateboard products did well over the winter months. This makes him feel confident for the summer season, but he has not invested much in pre-orders for the winter either and would like to wait and see how things develop there. The shop is still well stocked with this year's goods. As we hear from all over, there are strong regional differences and product groups that perform very differently. When we spoke to Thomas, he was about to go snowboarding. On that note: ride on, see you on the mountains!

BJOERN BETTERMANN

in 2019 opening a new store. During the lockdown they've faced many challenges but with positive signs on the horizon. "The demand was high and we've increased online sales, though we can't compare the numbers as if we had our doors open", said the Marketing Manager, Maria João. "We had to adapt quickly to this new reality with a team more focused on Facebook and Instagram, so we could keep our loyal customers happy. Our shops are already recognized for the extreme care we put into our customer service and even in lockdown we wanted to maintain standards. We are one of the top core hardware shops in Portugal with some of the best brands in the world and we made the huge effort to keep everyone happy. We are confident that we will hit our goals in 2021."

In the case of Samadi Caparica Surf Center, one of the most important surf shops in Costa de Caparica, the lockdown was hard to deal with because there were low online sales, even with free shipping above 50 euros, which is the reason why almost all of its employees were furloughed. "We felt the lack of stock happening worldwide and our online sales were hurt", said Samadi's General Manager, Rico Moser. "The demand is mainly on hardgoods because people are locked at home so they don't feel the need to buy new shoes or apparel". With one week away to reopening doors, the lack of stock is their main concern. "We're worried because we think there will be a boom in demand similar to 2020 in skateboard and surf hardgoods. But the big difference is that now there's low stock in hardgoods while in May 2020 there was plenty of it allowing us to have the best year in sales of the past ten years."

As we can see right now there's a lot of mixed feelings among retailers when we're just one week from reopening. In some stores there's lack of stock so there's concern. But on the other hand, they're busy finding solutions to guarantee enough product so when doors reopen, they will work at full speed in spring/summer and recover from the loss. Uncertainty is in the air.

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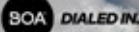
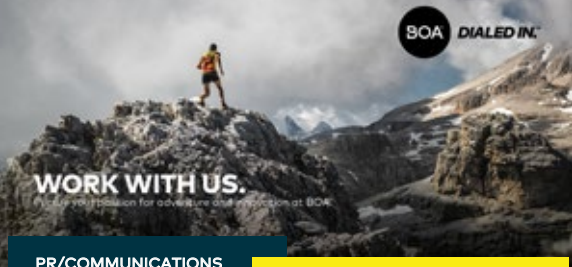
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