

Windsurfing: Oregon's Fastest Growing Sailing Sport

by Kelli J. Ray

They're everywhere, skimming the lakes' surfaces in the summer sun, propelled by multi-colored sails full of wind and refreshed by occasional face-fulls of spray.

Windsurfing (also known as sailboarding and boardsailing) is becoming Oregon's fastest-growing sailing sport, and Eugene's boardsailers, with two major reservoirs and several nearby lakes to choose from, live in an ideal location to make the most of this.

Those interested in learning to boardsail will find lessons available at nearby Orchard Point Park throughout the summer, and those who've been sailing for some time can try racing in an upcoming event sponsored by the State Games of Oregon.

High quality, competitive racing and sailing for novices, intermediates, and Olympic hopefuls takes place June 27 and 28 at Orchard Point Park at Fern Ridge Reservoir. Although advanced registration requires that entries be received by June 16, those who missed the deadline can still enjoy watching. Events include team relay, Olympic Triangles, longboard slalom, long distance, and free style demonstrations. Judges will present 3" gold, silver and bronze medals to the first, second and third place winners in each division, and winners will also be recognized at the State Games of Oregon opening ceremonies July 10, at the Portland Civic Stadium.

Because boardsailing is a fairly new sport, this is the first time it has been included in the state games. Invented in Jamaica Bay by Jim Drake and Hoyle Schweitzer, it is a cross between surfing and sailing. The two first presented sailboarding in 1967, and it was introduced in Europe in 1971 where it quickly developed into a major sport. Windsurfing's rapid expansion induced the International Olympic Committee to adopt the sport as the seventh Olympic sailing event for the 1984 Olympic Games.

According to Drake, boardsailing has widened its appeal due to two factors. The first is better equipment. "The boards and the boom/sail/mast assembly have become lighter, stronger, and more manageable," he says. "Beamier, more stable boards and training sails are available to ease the early frustrations and create confidence." The second factor is that the sport has matured enough so that pro-

fessional instructors have developed boardsailing techniques to pass on to others.

If you're interested in windsurfing, a complete boardsailing set-up (including board, sail, life jacket, wet or dry suit, and gloves) costs from \$530 for the least expensive equipment to \$2,000 for the most expensive. "But first of all, although this may not sound like a real good business decision on my part, I would ask people to take a lesson, rent, and try it out to see how much they want to get into it before they buy," says Joe Millon, salesman and school director at Bay Sailboards. "What happens is that some people like it for an occasional thing, but a lot of people get hooked and realize they're willing to put some money out."

Lessons are available through Bay Sailboards from noon to 8 pm each summer from Memorial Day until Labor Day. "Lessons run \$25 for a three hour session, your introductory lesson. You usually take another three hour lesson to finish up your skills," says Millon, who teaches approximately 500 students a year. "The first lesson gets you going and shows you how to get back safely. The second lesson fills in things like rigging your board, safety considerations and better sailing techniques." Millon believes that after two lessons, a person will feel confident about making decisions such as where to sail, what size sail to use, and how to get back to shore if something breaks.

Once a person is hooked, equipment is available from five local outlets:

- Bay Sailboards, 388 W. 6th
- Boardsports, 2475 Jefferson
- DAS Marketing, Inc., 1190 Main Street
- Emerald Windsurfing, 3840 Cross
- Riverwest, 1565 W. 7th Ave.

But even with the best equipment money can buy, it's best to exercise caution the first few times on an ocean or lake. "When you start sailing, there are several plateaus that you pass, and you get really excited the first time

there is a windy day," says Millon. "If you're not careful, you'll get out there and find out that the wind is 50 times stronger than you ever thought it was, and you can't even stay on the board—you're just flying through the air. And then all of a sudden it occurs to you that you're out in the middle of Fern Ridge, quite a ways from shore, and you've got to get back."

Millon experienced something similar to this several years ago off the coast of Hawaii, when he and a friend were trying to sail 40 and 50 knot winds. "I was going so fast that I wasn't sure where I was going, spending more time out of the water than I was in it. I could just hang on for 10 or 15 seconds until the gust hit the sail and grabbed everything out of my hands. Then I'd pop up and try and find my board."

"We thought it was pretty safe. My

buddy was in an inflatable boat, a Zodiac which was pretty powerful and had a couple of anchors. He was going to come out and rescue me, and then sail for a while himself." But the winds intensified, and with clouds of sand blowing off the beach, neither person could see the other. When Millon's friend finally found him, the two switched places, and Millon, exhausted, crawled into the boat. Millon's friend, a better sailor, thought he could sail back to shore. "He found out he couldn't do anything. So we both crawled into the boat, and tried to make it back to shore that way," says Millon.

But the winds were too strong, so the two threw down both anchors, huddled in the bottom of the boat un-

til the wind died down, and 1½ hours later they were able to start working their way back towards shore. As they came in, they picked up two other sailboarders who were adrift.

Some sailboarders not only take undue risks, they get hooked enough to be called fanatics. Baron DeRosnay, from France, tried to sail every strait he could find. "He tried to sail from Alaska to the USSR and got in trouble," says Millon. When he eventually tried to sail the China Sea, from Japan to China, DeRosnay disappeared.

In the Eugene area, however, the danger is minimal, especially if you sail with a partner and wear a life-jacket. So try a lesson or stop by Fern Ridge Reservoir and see what the fuss is all about.



PHOTO BY DAVID STEIN

Fern Ridge Reservoir is one of Eugene's most popular sailboarding spots. Lessons can be taken there.

EXTRA EDITION

Citizen Amazed at Sidewalk Sale

Citizens of Eugene were dumbfounded to find shoes for only \$10 a pair at the weekend sidewalk sale at Feet Plus on the corner of Fifth and Pearl.

John Common, local Eugenian, was strolling with his family when the sight of major brand athletic shoes for only \$10 caused him to stop and sweat at the thought of saving so much money.



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To his chagrin, the secret was out and he had to fight two kids for the shoes of his choice.

When questioned

later . . . John said, "No kid's going to cheat me out of a chance to save that much money even if that kid's my own!"

Fortunately for family harmony, John's kids, Edna and Edgar, found shirts, socks, and tights at ridiculous savings.

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Further stories and details to follow.

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