

Surf Riding, Sport of Ancient Hawaiian Kings

First Break Riders Thunder Shoreward With Express Train Speed

By Clifford Gessler

SPEED, speed—the mania of the age. Stream-lined trains, faster and faster motor cars and planes, rocket ships—and yet one of the oldest natural speed sports survives and thrives. Surf-riding, the ancient sport of Hawaiian kings now a modern American sport at Waikiki.

They do it the year round, but it is at its best when the trade wind blows, as it does the greater part of the year, piling up sharp hills of surf that rise and crest and rush foaming shoreward over the one spot in the world that is perfectly suited to the sport. For the conformation of the reef off Waikiki is such that it forms a smooth, long-running wave that carries surfboards and canoes before it with a speed calculated as equal to that of an express train.

The boards are nine to sixteen feet long weighing up to 130 pounds, and shaped so as to take advantage of the drive of the wave. The old time ones were made of native wood; when white residents revived the royal sport, they made them of California redwood; then the lighter balsa wood came in, and lately hollow boards, suggesting the hull of a speedboat, have been introduced. They have grown longer and narrower, and the old square-tailed shape has been cut to streamlines—reviving, authorities say, an ancient type used long ago by chiefs and forgotten.

They are carried to the water by hand, balanced deftly on strong shoulders, then let down easily to rest in the curve of the arm while the surfer watches the waves. Choosing his moment he launches the board with a short run down the slant of beach and a smooth glide in the water, leaps lightly upon it and stands erect a moment before dropping flat to paddle it, with a modified breast-stroke, out to where the real surf begins.

WITH smooth, steady strokes on either side, he rows it, steering with a foot dragged behind, heading for the lowest part of the "break." A great wave thunders down upon him. Flattening himself close to the board, he dives under and through it, rising in swirling foam. Another and larger wave charges down like a falling wall. This time he ducks quickly under the board and turns it on edge, holding on firmly from beneath, lest it be torn from his grasp and crash down upon him.

Beyond the break, he rises and sits astride, watching the seaward horizon for the bulge of an oncoming wave. One, two waves go by. He lets them pass, holding his seated pose. Here,



Surf riders, silhouetted against the Hawaiian sky, are a characteristic feature of the American resort. It was at Waikiki that surf riding was originated.

(Pan-Pacific Press Bureau Photo)

where they are not breaking, he can do that. The third wave will be the largest.

Look! It stands dark against the edge of the world. That long swelling in the open sea will gather and strike with the power of a catapult. Turning his board with the nose pointing shoreward, he lies flat again, flailing the water with powerful, rhythmic strokes. The wave gains on him with incredible rapidity. But he has acquired enough speed not to be swamped by it.

It overtakes him. This is the crucial moment. Moving with deft precision and lightning speed, he must keep a delicate balance. If he lies too far back on the board, the wave will rush past him. If he presses too far forward, it will ham-

per him and the board down into the depths, perhaps to crash on the coral bottom.

Balancing briefly on the speeding crest, the board shoots down the steep forward surface of the wave. Drawing back on the board to avoid cutting beneath the surface, the rider quickens his stroke, striving to keep enough speed so as not to lag behind and be overwhelmed.

He has "caught" the wave. Rising to his knees, still striking out rapidly with his arms, he drives the board in harmony with the rushing wave. When he is sure of holding the wave, he rises erect, gliding birdlike before a moving wall of water ten, twenty, perhaps thirty feet high.

IT IS a clever feat of balancing, to stand upright on a narrow bit of wood traveling at that speed. He guides it by shifting his weight. To increase speed and lengthen the ride, he steers to right or left, at an angle with the motion of the wave. By this application of a law of force, he is traveling even faster than the wave itself.

Fifty yards, a hundred, perhaps even five hundred yards, he soars on. Such rides have been known to continue as much as half a mile. When the wave slows down to the point where it will no longer propel a board with a man standing on it, he dives off, or lowers himself to a prone position, and paddles out for another thrilling ride.

guide it while lying flat, and much practice in the armstroke is necessary before the muscles are developed for real surfing. Later one learns to stand alongside one's board in waist-deep water, leap upon it, shoving off with the feet just before the wave strikes, and to stand up on it in front of a small wave. After a few weeks or months of this, one acquires enough control of the board to venture into the larger surf, half way out, and operate in the regular way. But only master riders should attempt "first break surf." It isn't as easy as it looks.

Nor is it something you can do once in a while. As in tennis or golf, one has to keep up form. Muscles develop with use, and coordinations adapt themselves, but they won't stay adapted without constant practice. Surfing is an exacting sport, demanding perfect physical condition at all times. Properly learned and practiced, it is one of the most exhilarating, thrilling activities America has for lovers of the out of doors.

It is an entrancing sport. The nearest approach to it, in mainland pastimes, is skimming down a snow-covered mountainside on skis. But American inventiveness has introduced many variations. Some have set sails on their surfboards and glide before the tradewinds on these miniature yachts. Others have cut openings and set panes of glass into the bottom, so they can look down on the fantastic shapes of coral and many-colored fishes beneath them. Almost any day at Waikiki you can see riders doing circus stunts on their speeding boards—standing on their heads, carrying one another on their shoulders.

ARARER experience, but one of the most exquisite known, is surfing at night. For a few nights each month the full moon silvers the waves, making them visible far enough away to allow a skilled rider to catch them. He rides in a scene of fairyland beauty—the broad bay, streaked with shimmering tracks of moonlight; the curving shore dotted with lines of lights; the dark bulk of mountains looming in the distance; foam glowing unearthly white in the half-darkness near at hand. Like shadowy sea monsters, the great swells of the Pacific creep silently toward the waiting riders. Keen eyes glimpse from afar the bulge of the wave as it glistens with moonlight. With a shout, they are off; with swift, sure strokes, they mount the climbing wave, and rise, exultant, to ride in moon-drenched joy the foam-necked steeds of sea.

Modernized as the sport has become, in some respects, it has not lost all of its old traditions. In periods of calm, the "beach boys," a large part of whose living depends on guiding visitors to the surfing waters and teaching them the sport, still practice an ancient magic to lure the tall waves over the Pacific horizon. Early in the morning, before the hotel guests have arisen from their beds, you will see a beach boy—and he may be a white-skinned one—heaping up a mound of sand, wreathing it with a certain vine, and hear him muttering cabalistic words in the island tongue.

The WHIRLWIND TENNIS VICTORS

George M. Lott, Jr.
RIGHTLY TERMED THE
DOUBLES KING OF THE WORLD

Lester R. Stoeffen
FAMOUS FOR HIS CANNON-BALL
SERVICE AND TERRIFIC SMASHES

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THE OUTLOOK FOR A WINNING COMBINATION LOOKED BLACK—THEN A CHANCE MEETING OCCURRED

LOOK AT THAT HAND-SOME GUY SMASHING THAT BALL!

YES, HE AND LOTT ARE UNBEATABLE TOGETHER

LOOKS AS IF AMERICA HAS A WINNING DAVIS CUP PAIR

GOOD WORK, STOEFF—WE'VE WON THE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP INSIDE OF A WEEK

HOORAY, AMERICA WINS THE DOUBLES!

I SAY—WHAT A RIPPING EXHIBITION OF COOL NERVES

THAT'S MATCH POINT

AND SO—THE TERRORS of the TENNIS COURTS—LOTT and STOEFFEN

WIN THE CHAMPIONSHIPS OF GREAT BRITAIN, FRANCE, AND AUSTRALIA, AS WELL AS THE U.S.—THEN SCORE A VICTORY FOR AMERICA IN THE FAMOUS DAVIS CUP MATCHES

MY EXPERIENCE IS THAT CAMELS MAKE FOOD TASTE BETTER AND DIGEST BETTER. I SMOKE THEM FOR DIGESTION'S SAKE AND BECAUSE CAMELS ARE SO MILD THEY DON'T UPSET MY NERVES

MAKE CAMEL YOUR CIGARETTE

CAMELS STIMULATE DIGESTION IN A PLEASANT, NATURAL WAY BY INCREASING THE FLOW OF DIGESTIVE FLUIDS—ALKALINE DIGESTIVE FLUIDS—VITAL TO THE ENJOYMENT OF FOOD AND GOOD DIGESTION. CAMELS ARE MADE FROM FINER, MORE EXPENSIVE TOBACCOS—TURKISH AND DOMESTIC—THAN ANY OTHER POPULAR BRAND.

(SIGNED) R. J. REYNOLDS TOBACCO COMPANY
WINSTON-SALEM, NORTH CAROLINA

HOW THEY DO IT

LOTT NEVER MAKES A WRONG SHOT—SEE THAT SHARP-ANGLED RETURN

HIS DEADLY VOLLEYING FORCES HIS RIVALS INTO PUTTING UP SHORT LOBS

THEN HE CALMLY STEPS ASIDE WHILE THE GIANT STOEFFEN SMASHES THE BALL—IT BOUNCES TO THE SKY

STOEFFEN IS A REAL KILLER—HIS SERVICE GOES OVER 131 MILES AN HOUR

PRETTY TOUGH GOING, EH, STOEFF? BUT A GOOD DINNER AND A FEW CAMELS WILL FIX US UP!

YOU'RE RIGHT, ON BOTH COUNTS, GEORGE

AN ENGLISH MUTTON CHOP—CUT THICK—LYONNAISE POTATOES, LIMA BEANS—AND—

I'LL HAVE THE SAME—AND ANOTHER PACK OF CAMELS

WELL, THE STRAIN OF PLAYING TENNIS CERTAINLY DOESN'T AFFECT EITHER OF YOU WHEN IT COMES TO MEALTIME

WHEW! 60 GAMES IN ONE SET—THEY'VE SET AN ALL-TIME RECORD!

AGAIN—IN A BOSTON PRO MATCH WITH TILDEN AND VINES—THEY DEMONSTRATE THEIR UNTIRING ENERGY IN THE LONGEST DOUBLES SET ON RECORD

For Digestion's Sake—Smoke Camels