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Windsurfing combines best of sailing and surfing worlds

By TOM MANN

What could be easier than putting a sail on a surfboard and slicing through the water like a hot knife through butter? Fighting Larry Holmes or running a three-minute mile would be if the beginning board sailer didn't have the needed instruction.

Board sailing has become the fastest growing sport in the world — and for good reason. Invented some 14 years ago in Southern California by Hoyle Schweitzer, a surfer, and Jim Drake, a sailor, board sailing — also known as windsurfing — combines the agility and balance of surfing with the precision and tactical skill of sailing.

A sailboard is basically a specially produced surfboard made from foam-filled polyethylene. The standard board is approximately 12 feet long, 25 inches wide and weighs 65 pounds when fully rigged with a mast, boom and sail.

A sailboard has no rudder so all the steering is done by manipulating a curved tubular rail called the wishbone. The wishbone is connected to the sail and mast which is attached to the board by a swiveling universal joint.

The universal joint allows the mast and sail to move in any direction and any angle so the windsurfer can take full advantage of the wind.

When the mast is pushed forward by tilting the wishbone, the board heads off-wind and in turn when the mast is pulled aft, the board heads into the wind.

This may seem fairly simple and straightforward — but without proper instruction, a beginner's first time out could turn into a nightmare.

This spring term, the University started an introductory windsurfing course which is offered through the physical education department.

The course teaches the students basic sailing theory. Subjects include how the boat



Photo by Michael Clapp

A favorite area for board sailing in Lane County is at Dorena Lake's Baker Bay.

works on the water, safety techniques, rigging the craft, and self-rescue.

The class uses a simulator to learn how to work the sail. The simulator is a sawed-off sailboard that swivels on a stationary mount. This helps the student to get a feel of the wind in the sail without taking the chance of getting wet.

Teaching assistant Jon Bouffleur tells his students to "close their eyes and feel it." He believes this helps the student get away from thinking

too much and cuts down on mental mistakes.

The class gets hands-on experience at Dorena Lake after they have learned the techniques in the classroom. This year the classes were only able to go out on the lake only once, however. Bouffleur hopes to increase that to at least three trips next year. He also hopes to have an advanced class for experienced windsurfers.

"The first couple of times

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