

SURFING

**IN SEARCH OF THE
PERFECT WAVE**



- **From novice to pro**
- **Learn about equipment and technique**
- **Includes the world's best surfing spots**

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SURFING

To our friend Buje



SURFING

In Search of the Perfect Wave

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Contents

Foreword

I The Origin of Surfing

II Surfing for Beginners

1 How to Start

1.1 Requirements

1.2 Equipment

1.2.1 The Right Surfboard for the Beginner

1.2.2 The Wetsuit

1.2.3 Wax and Leash

1.3 Preparation

2 The First Wave

2.1 The Right Wave for the Beginner

2.2 Get Ready (on the Beach)

2.3 How Do I Get Out?

2.3.1 Entering the Water

2.3.2 Paddling

2.3.3 Dealing with Broken Waves

2.4 How to 'Catch' a Wave

2.4.1 Paddling for a Wave

2.4.2 Catching a Wave

2.4.2.1 The Prone Position

- 2.4.2.2 Standing up
- 2.5 How Do I Get Back to the Beach?

3 Now Let's Surf!

- 3.1 Riding a Wave
- 3.2 The First Manoeuvres
- 3.3 General Tips for the Beginner

III Advanced Surfing

- 1 What's Next?
 - 1.1 Requirements for an Advanced Surfer
 - 1.2 Equipment for the Advanced
 - 1.3 The Surf Code
 - 1.4 The Duck Dive
- 2 How Waves Are Created
 - 2.1 Weather
 - 2.2 How to Read a Surf Spot
- 3 Let's Get Serious!
 - 3.1 Surfing Hollow Waves
 - 3.2 Surfing Big Waves
 - 3.3 Manoeuvres for the Advanced
 - 3.4 General Tips for the Advanced

IV Waves around the World

- 1 Tips for a Surfari
- 2 Europe
- 3 USA and Hawaii

- 4 Australia
- 5 South Pacific
- 6 Indonesia
- 7 South Africa
- 8 The Rest of the World
- 9 Boat Trips

V Competitive Surfing, Surf Lingo and Information

Competitive Surfing

Surf Lingo

Information

FOREWORD

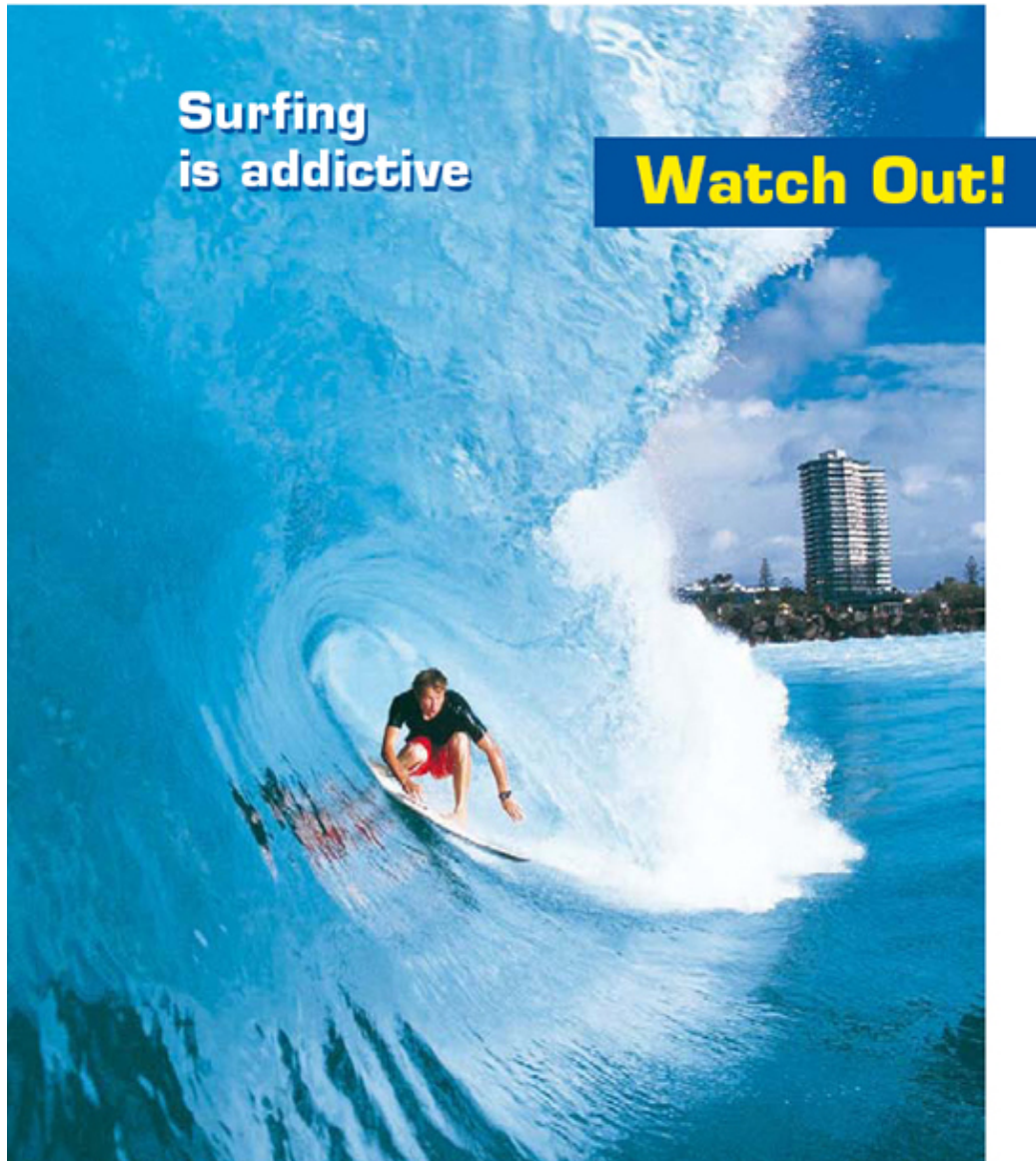
On a trip to the South Pacific, we were surfing with a group of Australians on a remote reef in Fiji. During a wave lull, as we started chatting they asked where we came from. The answer, "... from Europe" caused a few puzzled looks, and we could see big question marks appearing over the heads of the Australians - "do you guys have any waves?"

Of course, these days there are thousands of surfers in Europe. France, Spain, Portugal, UK and even Germany all have professional surfers on the professional surfer circuit. This said, for most people living away from the coast in Europe (like us - the authors), surfing is rather an unusual sport, and there have been many occasions when it has been necessary to start explaining what surfing is all about. "No, not surfing the Internet, (whoever thought up this term should be punished anyway), no we do not use a sail. Yes, exactly that - riding the waves - just like in Hawaii."

On top of all that, here we are, two landlocked Euros, writing a book about surfing. However, we believe that the experience we have gathered during a long learning process will be useful to surfers and to beginners, who have not grown up by the sea or live there. Indeed, it does require particular effort and, above all, regular travel to become a surfer. But the message we give you is that anyone can learn surfing and have lots of fun doing it.

People are continually discovering this fascinating sport. Although snowboarding (surfing on snow) and

skateboarding (surfing on the road) originally evolved as alternatives for surfing, there are today many skate- and snowboarders, who are still only just now discovering surfing as a sport. The characteristics of these sports are very similar and many of the movement sequences resemble each other.



(Photo: Hilton, Billabong)

There is the unforgettable and unbelievable kick when you snowboard through untouched powder, get big air in

a half pipe, or successfully come out of a tube on a wave.

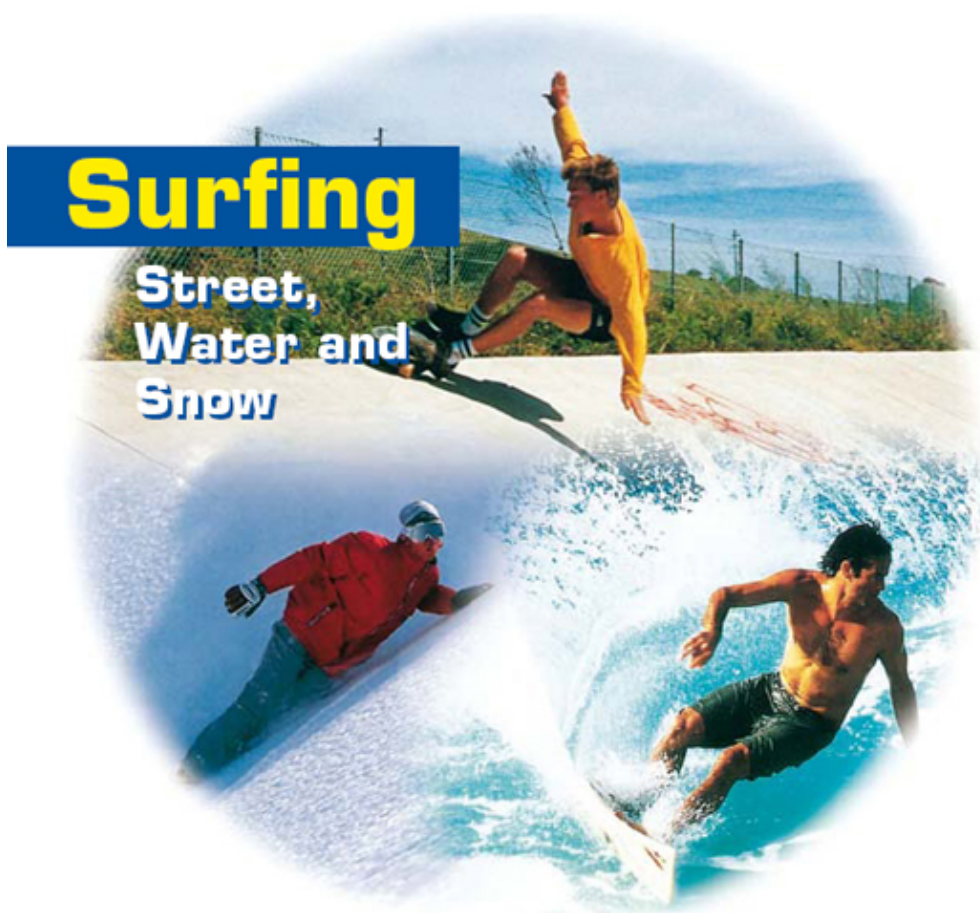
We have been surfing for about 25 years and have taught many how to surf. “Just do it!” – is definitely the right approach to surfing. Experience has shown, however, that a considerable amount of time, hassle and injury can be saved if some theoretical basework is done before heading out into the ocean. Well, you guessed it. Now is the moment to invest some time and read about the basics of wave riding. We are not going to try and teach you using scientifically proven methods.

On the contrary, we would like to offer some theory, however rather use a few real life experiences, anecdotes and stories from the surfing world to explain what it is all about. This book has been written with the beginner as well as the advanced in mind. The beginner will not have to continually bore the “cool surfers” with basic questions such as “Why do you tie that rope to your foot?” He will not make the whole beach erupt in laughter by waxing the wrong side of the surfboard (the underside). The advanced surfer will find some tips in our book that will help him progress on his way to becoming a genuine hardcore surfer.

A few years ago we decided to live our greatest dream – a journey round the world in search of the perfect wave. Our trip took us from Bali to Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Tahiti, USA and to Mexico. Believe us – the perfect wave does exist. However one will never surf the same wave twice because every wave is different to the next. To make your search for the perfect wave a little easier, our book includes details of various surfing destinations in this world. We will provide you with many little yet often important tips to increase the fun factor on your travels and help you find your way in unfamiliar countries and waters.

A famous surfer once answered the question on who he thought was the best surfer in the world by replying, "The best surfer in the world is the one having the most fun." But, be careful, surfing is addictive! Once you have ridden your first glassy, long, green wave you will have nothing but surfing on your mind. So "Surf hard and respect the ocean." Enjoy reading this book!

N.B. To avoid repetition and easier reading; whenever the male pronoun is used the female form is equally meant to be included.



Surfing

Street,
Water and
Snow

(Photos: Street – Menges & Diel,
Water – Joli, Snow – Xandi Kreuzeder, Chiemsee)

I THE ORIGIN OF SURFING

Even today the Hawaiians and the Tahitians still argue over the origin of surfing. One thing is sure - it started in Polynesia. Just exactly when surfing started there, however, is still a little uncertain and not proven. There are indications in native songs that this spectacular water sport was already being carried out in the 15th century. So, even before the white man placed foot on the Polynesian shores, waves were being ridden there. On his sea travels in 1777, Captain James Cook was the first white man to enjoy watching the Polynesian natives playing with the waves.

Thanks to one of their successors, the Hawaiian Duke Kahanamoku, surfing became so popular in our time. The "Duke" was an excellent swimmer and won several Olympic gold medals for the USA. On a visit to Australia, the "Duke" also demonstrated what he was capable of when it came to using a board. Riding waves - surfing - became increasingly popular from that moment on and spread across to California, New Zealand, South Africa and to Europe.

There are, of course, many more highly influential and legendary surfers who should be named here, like for example the American Greg Noll, "da Bull" - the big wave legend who rode one of the biggest waves of all times already in the 60s, or "the Gull", Australian Mark Richards - who won four consecutive world titles in the seventies and eighties on his twin fin surfboards. Then there is Nat Young - the Australian surfing legend who

introduced a new much more radical, manoeuvre oriented surfstyle, as well as of course the Michael Jordan or Tiger Woods of this sport , “his Eightness” the incredible, eight times (and counting) world Champion Kelly Slater - who is writing surfing history as you read this, and so on and so forth. But this is not a history lesson rather a surf lesson, so let’s get on with it.



(Photo: Menges/Diel)

II SURFING FOR BEGINNERS

Now you know where wave riding comes from. But how are you going to turn yourself into a second Duke? Well, nothing is guaranteed, but the following sections will help for sure.

1 How to Start

Alright, you have decided to become a surfer. Sounds good. Just think of all those unreal pictures on television and in the magazines! Looks really cool! But, unfortunately, it is not as easy as many top surfers make it look. The multitude of different factors that make it possible to actually stand up on a board and glide on a wave, without a sail and without footstraps, turn the first steps into an uphill struggle.

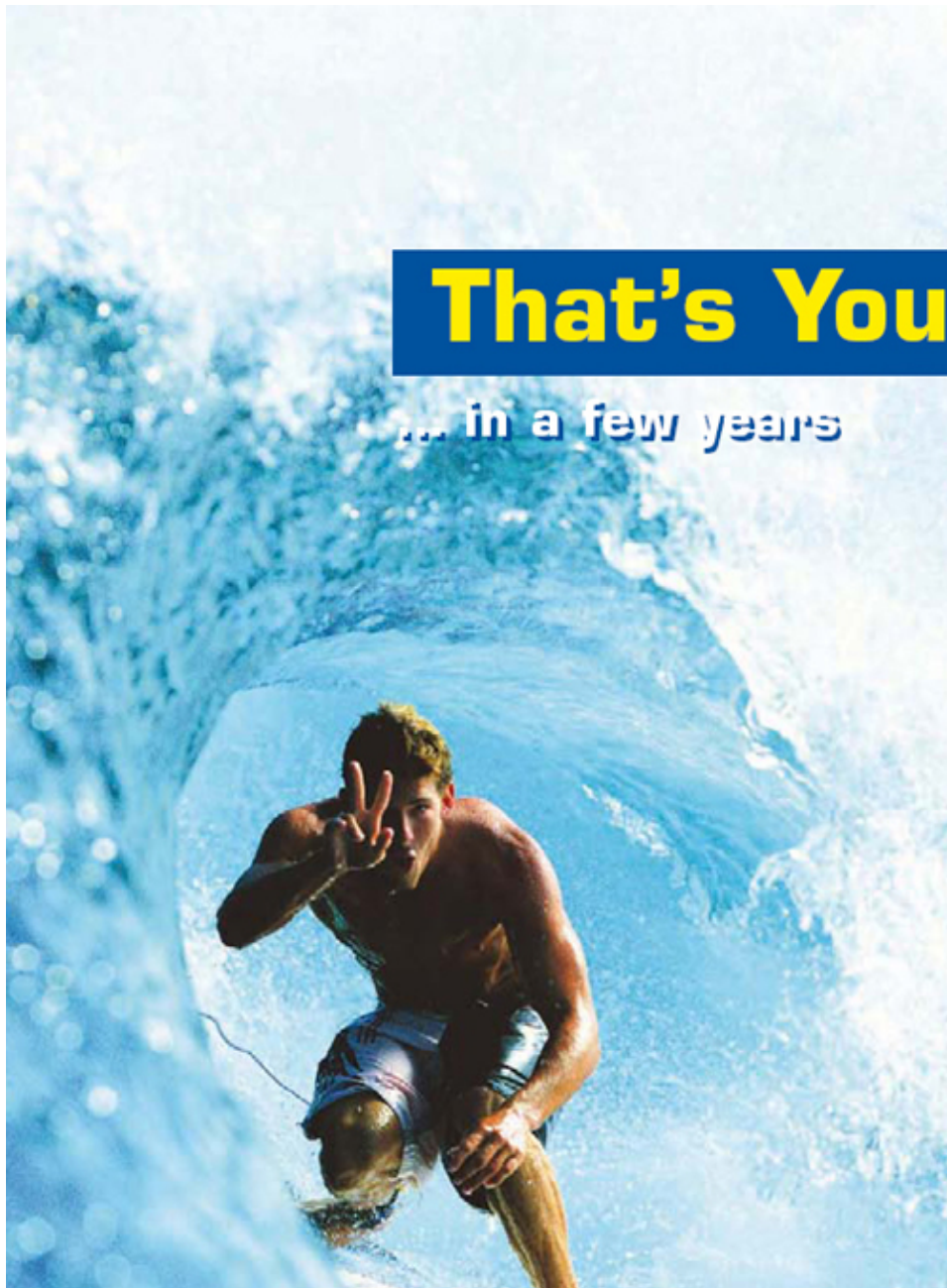
But don't give up just yet. Although many hours will be spent sitting in freezing water waiting for the waves that never came, and with your motivation close to zero, all of a sudden all will come together. The right wave, the correct paddling speed, no one in the way - and there you are - standing, surfing your first wave. What a feeling. So never give up. It is well worth the effort.

1.1 Requirements

Who can learn to surf? Basically anyone who can swim! For surfing, the size of the body is relatively insignificant. Actually, short surfers have a little advantage because of their somewhat lower centre of gravity. Although you will mainly find male surfers, the amount of women in surfing (in particular in the wake of the movie *Blue Crush*) is ever increasing as women can just as easily learn to surf. Irrespective of whether you are a man or a woman you must have a lot of patience and endurance. Surfing demands skill, timing and knowledge about waves, currents and the sea bottom. Surfing can sometimes be a little dangerous, but if you are well prepared and are

aware of your own physical and psychological limits, even as a beginner you will have a lot of fun.

Oh yes, and one more thing. You better start saving money for your first big surfing trip to Australia, Bali or Hawaii.



(Photo: Billabong, Jason Childs)



Ineika Surf School Fuerteventura (Photo: Menges & Diel)

1.2 Equipment

1.2.1 The Right Surfboard for the Beginner

Selecting the right surfboard is a major factor for getting fun out of surfing, whether you are a beginner or an advanced surfer. The first surfboard should be long, thick and wide. The length and thickness gives the board more buoyancy, allowing you to paddle faster, and thereby helping you to catch a wave more easily. The width gives you extra stability when standing up. Either a longboard, or a hybrid or so-called Mini-Malibu is the most suitable board for the beginner. A typical longboard is between 9 and 10 foot long, 22 inches wide and between 3-4 inches thick. Let's stay with the English measuring system as this is most commonly used when boards or waves are described. But for those more used to metric measurements - 1 foot = 30.48 cm and 1 inch = 25.4

mm – thus we can easily translate the board into metric. A hybrid sits somewhere in between a longboard and a shortboard. It is about 6.5 to 8 feet long, 21-22 inches wide and 2.5-3.5 inches thick.

Besides the dimensions, there are a few other things to take note of. The board should not be too heavy and, above all, it should have no sharp edges e.g from previous repairs. Most injuries in surfing are caused by your own or by some other person's board. The most dangerous parts of the board are the tip of the nose and the fins. Thus the nose should be rounded and the fins should have no sharp edges (if necessary off the edges with sandpaper or get a board with those hard rubber fins). For a beginner it does not matter whether the board has one, two or three fins. The rails of the board should similarly also be smoothly rounded.

A surfboard is made out of a polyurethane foam core with a fibreglass laminate on the outer surface. The glass is easily damaged so therefore a surfboard must always be handled carefully. The ceiling of the surf shop is a classic for the first ding when you lift a brand new board up for inspection. So watch out! If, despite all the good advice and the greatest care, you have damaged the board somehow, you must get it fixed as quickly as possible. Otherwise the foam core mentioned earlier will soak up water, and after a while, the board will become heavier, develop brown spots and simply will be no more fun to surf.



When buying a second-hand board you must check the board for any unrepaired cracks on the surface, that the fins and fin plugs are firmly fixed and that the foam is not lifting at any place. Brown coloured spots mean that water has already penetrated into the board. Also cracks that run right from one side to the other of the board can mean that the board has been broken in two before and will probably break again soon. So keep your fingers off.

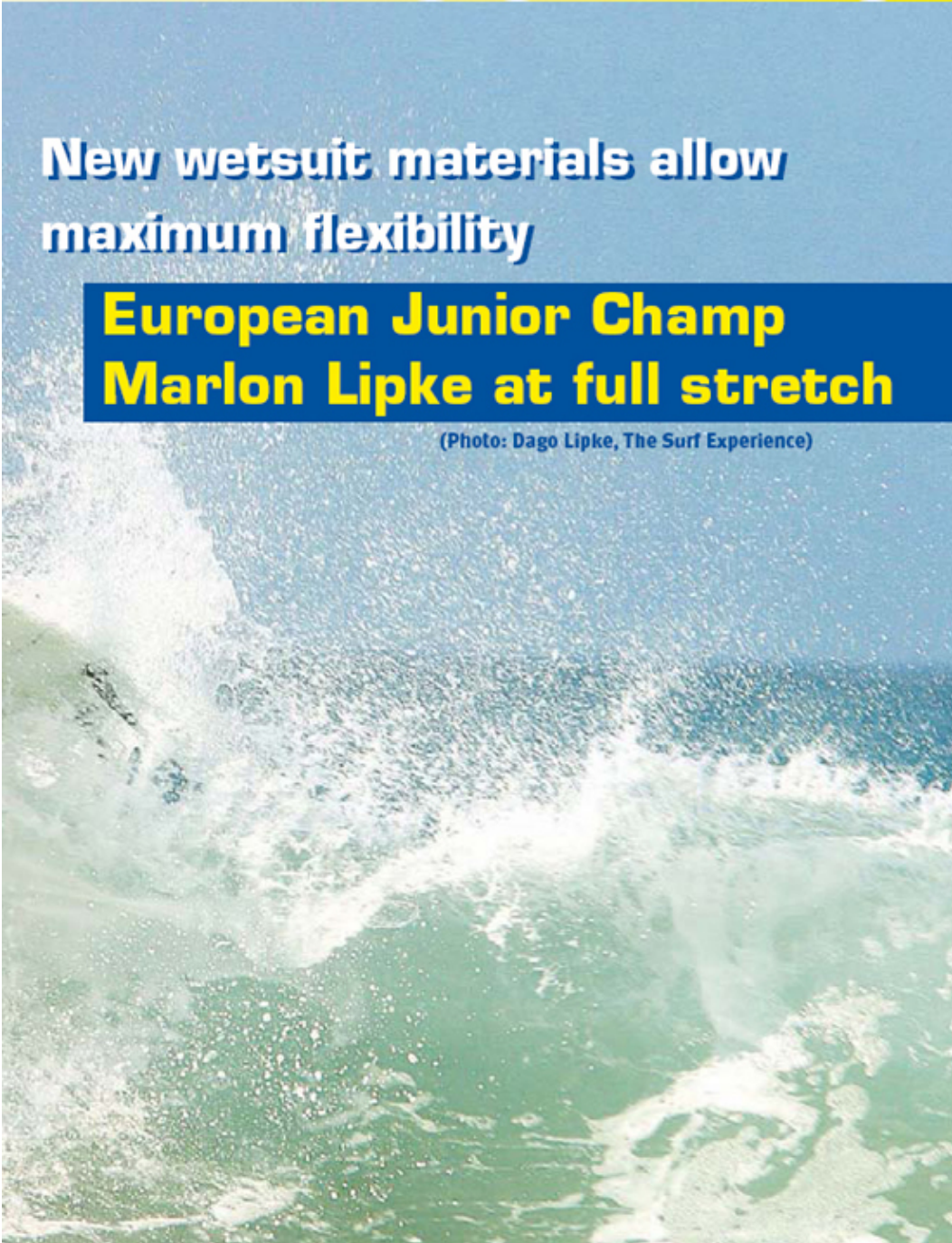
A good alternative to purchase is to rent a board on the spot. Many surfing shops have, amongst other things, boards especially for beginners to hire. Also most snowboarding or windsurfing shops can possibly be of help in the search for a board to hire. But remember: long, thick, wide and no sharp edges!

1.2.2 The Wetsuit

The amount of time you will be able to spend in the water while having a go at surfing will largely depend on your clothing - the wetsuit. Especially when the conditions are good there is nothing worse than to start freezing after only five minutes in the water.

Wetsuits are made from a kind of rubber called neoprene. Unlike the so-called 'drysuits' often used for windsurfing, which keep the body dry and protect the whole body from the cold water, neoprene suits work on a different principle. Water gets trapped between the rubber and the body and is then warmed by your own body temperature. However the next time you go under, the warm water is flushed out and changes place with fresh cold water, which is then warmed up again. The wetsuit must fit snugly on the body so that not too much water can penetrate i.e., the body does not have to warm up too much water. The suit should also sit relatively tightly on the arms, round the neck and the legs. The thickness of the neoprene determines how much the coldness of the water and the wind can reach the body from the outside.



An aerial photograph of a surfer riding a wave. The water is a vibrant blue-green, and the wave's crest is white with foam. The surfer is a small dark shape on the wave's face. The sky is a clear, light blue.

**New wetsuit materials allow
maximum flexibility**

**European Junior Champ
Marlon Lipke at full stretch**

(Photo: Dago Lipke, The Surf Experience)

This brings us to another important feature of a wetsuit – comfort. Too close a fit makes movement in the water difficult, and you will want to move a great deal. The same applies to thick suits that are on the one hand very warm, but on the other also very heavy and inflexible. Many of the neoprene suits used by windsurfers or divers

are therefore unsuitable for surfing. The thickness of the neoprene should be not more than 3 mm unless you are going to surf in extremely cold waters. The arms and legs of most surfing suits are 1 mm thinner than the rest. Very often you will find a number combination on the suit e.g., 3/2. This means 3 mm neoprene on the body part and 2 mm on the arms and legs.

Surfing suits come in various combinations, for example the 'full suit' or 'steamer' with long legs and sleeves, or the 'spring suit' with short sleeves and legs. To begin with use a suit with long legs. The sleeves can be either long or short. Long sleeves keep the warmth in but limit movement when paddling. If you choose a suit with long sleeves make sure it stretches well around the shoulders and arms to allow for easier paddling.

The final decision is obviously dependent on the price but also your personal warmth requirements (skinnier people loose heat much quicker), where you are going to use it and of course what you look like in it (the Captain Kirk look remains a classic).

You will often find that you develop a rash on certain parts of your body from wearing the wetsuit. This is caused by the neoprene rubbing against your skin. To protect yourself you can get a special T-shirt made out of Lycra or a similar material - so-called wet-shirts or rash guards that are worn under the suit. Smearing Vaseline on the sensitive places offers another solution to prevent the rubbing. Whilst the latest wetsuits really do not require any of those anti-rash measures you can also wear the Lycra shirt without the suit to protect yourself against sunburn.

Just a few tips to help extend the life of your wetsuit! Whenever possible, after each use, you should rinse your suit in fresh water. You should also never leave your suit out to dry in the sun. It is perfectly sufficient to hang it on