



Sailing, sailing...

Windsurfing, fast-growing sport

By LINDA ROBERTSON

Back in 1967, two Californians discussed the virtues and restrictions of surfing and sailing. The surfer, Hoyle Schweitzer, complained that the perfect wave was a rare commodity and that he spent most of his time waiting for one to come along. The sailor, Jim Drake, replied that rigging and maintaining a sailboat has become a time-consuming hassle and that he envied the simplicity of surfing.

The eventual byproduct of that conversation was a hybrid of surfing and sailing, yet a sport that is totally different from the two. Boardsailing, popularly known by the brand name of windsurfing, is now the fastest-growing sport in America and it will make its debut as an Olympic sport at the Los Angeles Games in 1984.

The boardsailing boom hit Europe long before it reached America. Some lakes in West Germany are so crowded that windsurfing licenses are required. In the United States the number of boards bought is tripling every year.

"It's an inexpensive sport, it's portable, safe and a fun form of exercise," said Hayes Harris, a windsurfing instructor based in Delray Beach, Fla. "Once you get the hang of it, boardsailing is also very addictive."

With the water at your toetips and the wind in your arms, part of the appeal of windsurfing is the thrill of being in control of the elements.

But it is not easy to master the free-sail system and the principle of mast-rake steering. Basically, you are using your arms like the main sheet of a sailboat. When operating the standard sailboard, there are four basic problems: (1) controlling the force that the wind creates in the sail and learning the art of balancing your weight against that force; (2) steering; (3) controlling the board's roll; and (4) finding the proper courses to sail to avoid obstacles and get to your destination.

The sailboard is an intriguing contraption. Initially awkward, it becomes the ultimate in grace when style is perfected. Windsurfing is like learning to ski or ride a bike. At first you fall down a lot, but once you get the hang of it, it becomes almost second nature.

"It's a very kinetic sport because you're always moving to manipulate the sail and keep your balance on that rather precarious perch," said George Sheppard, a UNC dental student and experienced windsurfer. "You get a feel for it after a while. All it takes is a little patience and practice."

Although previous experience in sailing or surfing is helpful, most people have difficulty learning how to boardsail without some instruction.

"I've seen novices learn it is in an hour and I've seen people struggle for six hours," said Rick Hill of the Ocean Drive Surf shop in Miami Beach. "It's a matter of getting your balance, learning to use the wishbone boom and judge the wind."

"An instructor can give you little hints and point out exactly what you're doing wrong," Hayes said. "We also have land simulators and special boards for beginners. After one or two lessons most people can strike out on their own."

In South Florida there are numerous boardsailing shops which rent equipment and provide instruction. The Ocean Drive Surf Shop, 10 Ocean Dr., Miami Beach, has a rather unique system, charging \$1 to join its club and \$8 for an hour's rental, but providing free lessons.

Hayes' Nomad Surf Shop is located at 4655 N. Ocean Blvd. (A1A) in Boynton Beach. He gives lessons at the south end of Delray public beach. A 30-minute lesson combined with a 30-minute rental is \$15. Rental without instruction costs \$10 an hour. Many hotels in Fort Lauderdale,

Miami Beach lessons.

After mastering the basics, you can move on to racing. Slalom sailing and jibing between buoys, freestyle competition and other possibilities seem endless. They can be enjoyed where

Linda Robertson Heel.

Come explore ocean depths

By LINDA ROBERTSON

Following the cold splash and momentary disorientation, a sense of wonder engulfs the diver as he beholds the alien world below. Mask, snorkel and fins, so clumsy and uncomfortable on land, seem to melt away underwater. A spiny lobster scuttles by and lavender sea fans wave languidly in the current. The roles are reversed in this life-size aquarium, and man becomes the object of hundreds of curious, sidelong glances. He is the temporary trespasser in this giant housing project for marine life—the coral reef.

The world beneath the sea is at its most beautiful in John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park, the first underwater state park and the only living coral reef in the continental United States. Located off Key Largo, Fla., it is a dynamic piece of real estate characterized by brilliant color and delicate movement.

Pennekamp is home for more than 650 varieties of tropical fish. Divers may hobnob with friendly parrotfish or find themselves gazing into the gloomy eyes of a grouper or at the toothy smirk of a barracuda. The population also includes the French grunt, orange butterfly, queen angel, sergeant major, snapper and seatrout, along with the Spanish hogfish and reclusive moray eel. The fish are not shy, for they are used to the protection the park affords them, and often they will swim up to a diver and peer into his mask, sizing up the strange intruder on their territory. Nothing can match the experience of being surrounded by a school of glassy sweepers, their silver fins reflecting the sunlight like an underwater prism.

Over 40 species of Atlantic corals serve as underwater housing for a dazzling array of marine life. The intricacy of the reef is riveting, and it is all just arm's length away from the diver.

Pennekamp is one of the natural wonders of the world. It is no wonder that both novice and experienced divers flock to Key Largo year-round.

For winter-weary college students, spending Spring Break in South Florida is an especially enticing vacation idea. Hundreds of thousands of students make the trip each year. But they often limit themselves to sunbathing during the day and bar-hopping at night. Just beyond the beach Pennekamp beckons. The park provides the perfect setting for students to dive in and do something different.

Snorkeling is the simplest way to explore a coral reef and Pennekamp is ideal for snorkelers because of its shallowness. Certified scuba divers can head for deeper valleys, but most of the action is above the 15-foot mark. Below that depth, the colors of the spectrum begin to fade.

Snorkeling is an easy recreational sport to master. Basically it requires only the ability to swim and breathe at the same time.

"If you can swim, you can snorkel," said Bob Edebebeck, general manager of the Coral Reef Park Company and dive shop. "Some people are a little apprehensive, but then they go out on the reefs and have a blast."

Once the mask is on and the snorkel is in place, all breathing is done through the mouth. You simply paddle along on the surface, face submerged while breathing through the snorkel, which sticks up above the water. Fins increase swimming efficiency three or four times. All propulsion comes from the fins—there is no need to use your arms. A long scissor kick from the hip is the most effective stroke.

"A good snorkeler is a slow snorkeler," Edebebeck said. "It's similar to walking through the North Carolina mountains. Take your time and you'll see a lot more than you would racing around. You'd be surprised at what starts to come out from the coral heads."

To get a closer look at the polyps of star coral or a sparkling jewel-like loitering between the branches of a staghorn formation, snorkelers perform a simple surface dive.

"Just do a jackknife dive. Arms and feet together, feet and the weight of the gear drive you down. It's very fast."

There are a few partners. The white anemone is a good partner. The white anemone is harmless, but the bright colors and skin redness are a rarity on Pennekamp. About the reefs, but the anemones are unduly irritating.

Dive shops in Miami offer day and rent equipment. Equipment is rented for \$2 each and runs \$15.

At the park itself, tours run at 9 a.m., and include equipment and snorkeling from about the trips, rangers and

Pennekamp is also a great place for water and calm seas.

"We've had a very good time. It should be in the list of things to do."

Vacationing students can enjoy a little sea excursion a little different from the usual Spring Break routine.

Linda Robertson is