

Sailing

Fall Break Getaway

Lakes attract a relatively new, but growing sport

By TOM CAMACHO
Staff Writer

Gazing out across a choppy, white-capped Jordan Lake, a local boardsailer grins. Turning, she looks over her shoulder to find the treetops at the lake's edge swaying in the steady breeze. Overhead, soft cumulus clouds gently make their way across the sky. Conditions are optimal, even in October.

All around her, boardsailers, sporting wetsuits, rig their sails. Others haul boards to the water's edge. The parking lot is buzzing with activity as busy sailers remove boards from the car tops, and still more board-topped autos search for a place to park.

Minutes later, her board rigged, she launches. As she pulls up her sail, the wind fills it and she is off, tearing across the lake. She leans back, arching, and suddenly it all comes together. It feels something like a cross between surfing, sailing and flying. It feels good; she can't help but smile.

Feelings like these have attracted many people in the triangle and all over the world to take up the exciting and fast-growing sport of boardsailing. Boardsailers from all over the Triangle flock to the water like Jordan Lake to experience the sensation and challenge of this relatively new sport.

Boardsailing has been around for several years, but only in the past two to four years has it become a popular water sport in the United States. Today, people boardsail all over the world, year-round. Our very own Tar Heel state hosts a large number of boardsailers and offers excellent sailing conditions both inland and on the coast. In fact, the outer banks has earned a reputation

among east coast boardsailers as the place to sail.

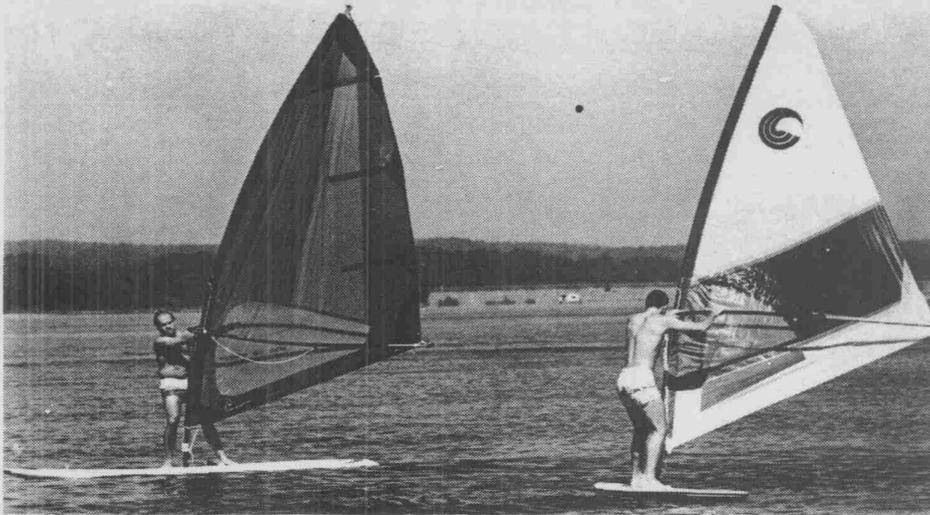
The sport has come a long way since S. Newman Darby first publicized it in a 1956 article in *Popular Science* magazine. The article read, "Sailboarding: Exciting New Water Sport for High-Speed Water Fun. A sport so new that fewer than 10 people have mastered it." Today, millions boardsail worldwide. Advances in design have made today's sailboards faster and more efficient than ever before. The best sailers on modern specialized boards can do amazing tricks that Darby surely never imagined.

Besides the thrills of the sailing itself, boardsailing has become popular for several reasons. First, the sport is relatively inexpensive. For anywhere from \$500 to \$1,000 a beginner can be fully outfitted. After this initial cost, however, the sailing costs only the gas it takes to reach the water. There are no expensive maintenance fees, no docking fees and no lift tickets to buy.

Convenience is another plus that makes boardsailing so attractive. The entire sailboard unit takes up little space, can be transported atop any car and can be launched by one person. And most convenient of all, water to sail on is normally not too hard to find.

"The cost, simplicity and size of the sport appeal to people of all ages," said Bob Shaffer, president of the Triangle Boardsailing Club. "And the majority of boardsailing is done on inland lakes like Lake Jordan," he said.

People of all ages, both men and women, enjoy boardsailing because it is not too difficult. Sailing the board requires proper technique but not a



Without any white lines to follow, sailboard racing involves skill, tactics and a knowledge of the rules.

great deal of strength. And to top it all, boardsailing is a good form of exercise. In a strong wind, a sailor's muscles must work overtime to control the sail.

The sport caught on in Europe in the early 1970s. The convenience of the sailboard's size suited the smaller quarters of the Europeans. Between 1973 and 1978, over 150,000 boards were sold

there. Today, well over a million people enjoy boardsailing in Europe alone. George Webster, an Englishman who works in the Triangle, recently made a trip to Europe and said the sport is a religion there. "On the roads, we counted and every sixth car had a sailboard on top," he said. "It's more popular there than it is in the states."

In the U.S., boardsailing is rapidly

growing. More and more people are learning how, and the market for boards has increased tremendously. Stores like Waterworld Marine Services in Durham, Triton's Cove in Raleigh, and the Trail Shop in Chapel Hill sell boards year-round. Waterworld and Kitty Hawk Kites in Nags Head, N.C., both offer lessons for beginners as well as experienced boardsailers. Both stores

also carry a full line of boardsailing accessories.

Learning to boardsail is not difficult. With good conditions and a knowledgeable instructor, an average beginner can be up and sailing in a couple of hours. Learning to handle stronger and stronger winds, however, takes a lot of practice and mastering any of the freestyle tricks of the sport takes even more.

The best boardsailers enjoy sailing in ocean waves. On the strong surfs of California and Hawaii, professional boardsailers can be seen sailing up the face of huge waves, shooting as high as 25 to 40 feet in the air. This obviously requires a good deal of experience. For any boardsailer though, ocean waves are an exciting challenge and bring a new dimension to the sport.

Boardsailing competition takes place all over the world. Types of competition include triangle racing, slalom, distance and freestyle wave riding. The sport was even featured in the 1984 Olympics. A small number of those who boardsail are professionals and compete worldwide for prize money year-round.

Boardsailing has grown popular for a number of reasons. The wind, the water, the sun, the simplicity and the cost all are given as reasons why boardsailers fell in love with their sport. But George Webster has a rather interesting story. "I was always fascinated by hang gliding," he explains, "but once I saw it done, it looked rather dangerous. I guess I got frightened. Boardsailing appeared less dangerous, so I tried it. It took only one trip and I was hooked."

Soaring

Flight-lovers flock to N.C. coast

By TOM CAMACHO
Staff Writer

On the sandy slopes of Jockey's Ridge, the thirteen-story monster dune on North Carolina's outer banks, over 50,000 people have soared like birds in the same coastal winds that called Wilbur and Orville Wright to leave Ohio and move to Kitty Hawk over 80 years ago.

Clearly visible from atop Jockey's Ridge, the tall, granite Wright Brothers Memorial, just four miles to the north, still presides over the flying that takes place in Kitty Hawk. The common sight of beginning aviators struggling to maintain "straight and level" on their very first flight is somehow quite natural in this windy hang glider's haven.

As the Wright Brothers well knew, the wind conditions and gentle slopes around Kitty Hawk are ideal for learning to fly. Today, hang gliders are the dominant mode of flight here and Kitty Hawk is the fitting home of the world's largest hang gliding school.

While the eastern end of the state offers favorable conditions for fledgling gliders, the mountains in the west have several prime hang gliding sites for more experienced pilots. North Carolina is the home of many hang gliding enthusiasts, most of whom live in the western part of the state. The North Carolina Hang Gliding Association was formed in 1982 and has well over 100 members. The USHGA boasts over 8,000 members and it is estimated that there are over 75,000 glider pilots world-wide. And the sport is growing.

Fittingly, the inventor of the hang gliding wing, Francis Rogallo, lives in Southern Shores on the outer banks, just a few miles from

Jockey's Ridge. Rogallo, a former aeronautical engineer at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, who has had a life-long infatuation with flying, is honored annually at the Hang Gliding Spectacular held in Kitty Hawk each May.

In its early stages, the sport of hang gliding was considered a crazy and dangerous thrill-seeker's pastime. The equipment used then was generally not regulated and many people were injured as a result. Today, the USHGA has developed a rating scheme which regulates the pilots who fly on the more difficult sites. Also, today's gliders are more technologically advanced. Fatal accidents are very rare, despite the fact that tens of thousands of pilots take off hundreds of thousands of times each year.

People of all ages and sizes come to Kitty Hawk to learn to hang glide. Most of those who take lessons at Kitty Hawk are tourists. A small percentage of these people take up the sport as a regular hobby. "I've taught people from eight years old to eighty at Jockey's Ridge," said Steve Wendt, experienced pilot and instructor at the Kitty Hawk Kites School.

Spots such as Grandfather Mountain attract many hang gliders as well as spectators. A team of pilots puts on daily demonstrations there. One member of the Grandfather Mountain Team, Stu Smith, is among the best hang glider pilots in the world. The Grandfather Mountain site is for very experienced pilots because of its high winds and steep cliffs. Tater Hill, a grassy mountain near Boone, is another popular hang gliding spot. Instructors at Kitty Hawk Kites make trips to Tater Hill for pilots who have learned at Jockey's Ridge and desire more

challenging conditions. Most of the other North Carolina hang gliding sites are centered around Asheville and Morganton.

Lessons at Jockey's Ridge are offered year-round through Kitty Hawk Kites. The Beginners course lasts about three hours and begins with classroom instruction. Learning pilots watch a training film and receive a glider's manual. For the last two hours, beginning students are shown how to handle a glider and finally make five launches under the close supervision of a qualified instructor. Normally, a beginner's flight is anywhere from 75 to 200 feet long and about 5 to 10 feet off the ground. The cost of the beginner's course is \$44. Serious students can take advanced lessons at Kitty Hawk and earn a USHGA hang rating (Hang I through Hang V) which allows them to fly at more difficult sites.

Advanced glider design has allowed experienced pilots to reach new heights and stay in the air longer. The record for distance in one flight is over 150 miles. One pilot stayed airborne for twenty-four hours straight. Fliers have soared as high as 20,000 feet.

These type flights don't happen at Kitty Hawk. The conditions simply don't allow it.

There is a challenge, however, that no pilot has yet accomplished. Francis Rogallo and his wife Gertrude have put up \$1,000 for the first person to fly from Jockey's Ridge up the four miles to the Wright Brothers Memorial and back. One good pilot managed to catch some favorable winds and flew up to the monument, but could not return to the ridge. As it stands, the challenge is... well... up in the air.



Rolling out the sails for a day on Jordan lake, are Tom Camacho, left, and Jim Gulley.

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